

A JUST PENINSULA



A book of articles written by the local community
about their activities supporting
a multicultural and socially just Australia

 **Good
Shepherd**
youth & family service


**MORNINGTON
PENINSULA**
Shire



**COMMITTED TO A
SUSTAINABLE
PENINSULA**

about this booklet

This booklet was funded by the Mornington Peninsula Shire in a joint project with Good Shepherd Peninsula, to celebrate social justice and access and equity principles and policies.

the booklet was created to:

- acknowledge Mornington Peninsula residents' groups and initiatives supporting people from non English-speaking backgrounds living in Australia
- record the stories of the Mornington Peninsula groups and activities supporting intercultural understanding
- showcase the variety of ways people are participating in social justice issues
- inspire people to become involved in community initiatives

This publication was created by the Mornington Peninsula community, including a working group of residents and community development workers at Good Shepherd Peninsula and the Mornington Peninsula Shire.

We have attempted to acknowledge all participants involved. If however, there are any omissions, please notify us so that we can make appropriate corrections for future copies.

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The opinions expressed in this booklet are those of the people interviewed and do not necessarily reflect the view of the Mornington Peninsula Shire or Good Shepherd.

Many thanks to Kate Durham for permission to reproduce her art work.
More information is available on Kate's website at www.katedurham.com

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the refugee charter

“Define us not by our differences but by the principles we share”

- 1 Recognition of the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.
- 2 Refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons have the right to be treated in accordance with international standards which accord respect to and protection of their fundamental human rights.
- 3 Everyone has the right to live without fear of persecution and to flee persecution.
- 4 Refugees have the right to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution in another country without having their entry prevented and without being penalised.
- 5 No refugee or asylum seeker shall be forced to return to a country where he or she might face persecution or torture.
- 6 Refugees are entitled to the security of an effective and durable solution in the form of voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement, within a reasonable time frame.
- 7 The unity of the refugee family is a fundamental right which must be respected.
- 8 Especially vulnerable members of refugee communities are to be treated with special care and where children are involved, the rights of the child must be paramount.
- 9 Asylum seekers have a right to have their claims processed through procedures which are transparent, fair and timely.
- 10 Asylum seekers are not to be subjected to arbitrary or unreviewed detention.
- 11 States have a responsibility to create a safe and welcoming environment for refugees, free from xenophobia and discrimination.
- 12 States have a responsibility to ensure that their refugee policies are ethically sound and consistent with international legal standards.

The Refugee Charter is an initiative of the Refugee Council of Australia.

indigenous community statement

BY VICKI NICHOLSON - BROWN

I am from the Wurundjerri people, part of the Kulin Nation.

I would like to pay my respect to the Boonerwung - also part of Kulin Nation - and to Elders past and present.

My people have always been hospitable. We are happy to share our resources and friendship. That's the way we are.

The Mornington Peninsula is rich in cultural diversity - it is home to people from all over the world and many Aboriginal people from all around Australia.

We need to understand one another and learn from each others' experiences so we can enjoy the great benefits of our cultural diversity. One way of doing this is to share and listen to each others' stories, as we have in written form through "A Just Peninsula".

We make welcome all the people who have decided to call this great country their home.

DJARREN WILSON PERFORMING AT THE A JUST PENINSULA PROJECT LAUNCH



foreword

BY JULIAN BURNSIDE QC

This is a remarkable publication. It brings together the stories of individual members of the community of the Mornington Peninsula. It shows how much good can be done in the community by people who are not deterred by the size of the problems which provoke them to action. It has restored my faith in the Australian community. To understand why I say that, I need to retell a little bit of recent history.

My naïve assumptions about our political leaders were first shaken when in 1998 I saw, at close quarters, how Mr Howard and other senior Ministers had conspired to breach the Workplace Relations Act in an attempt to remove the Maritime Union of Australia from the waterfront. To add insult to injury, they had agreed to underwrite Patrick Stevedores to the tune of \$100 million to implement the plan.

But it was Tampa and what followed it that made me reconsider my affection for this country. A few facts about our refugee policy are clear:

First: we receive far fewer unauthorised arrivals in Australia than most other nations do. Our refugee “problem” is a tiny one.

Second: boat people do not commit an offence by arriving here without papers.

Third: 90% of the boat people turn out ultimately to be genuine refugees.

Fourth: despite these facts, we lock-up boat people indefinitely in circumstances which drive many of them to despair, madness, self-harm or suicide.

Fifth: the Howard Government has strenuously (and successfully) argued in court for powers which no decent democratic government should ever seek, including:

- a. the right to hold a failed asylum seeker in detention for the rest of his life, if the Government is unable to remove that person from Australia;
- b. the right to hold children in detention regardless of age, health or other circumstances;
- c. the right to hold people in detention regardless how harsh or inhumane the conditions in detention may be.
- d. the right to send a failed asylum seeker to a place where death or torture is a certainty;

Sixth: people in immigration detention are often held in solitary confinement – for days or weeks at a time – but the use of solitary confinement is completely unregulated.

Seventh: people held in immigration detention are liable for the costs of their own incarceration. No other country in the world does this. The only precedents are Robespierre’s France (Article 8 of the Law of Suspects 1793) and Hitler’s Germany.

At the 2001 election, many voters might have been unaware of these matters and the terrorist attack on America just two months earlier cast a shadow across the issues in that election.

In 2004 it was different. Human rights abuses in our treatment of asylum seekers are widely known. In 2004 we had the Human Rights Commission’s finding that our treatment of children in detention was “cruel, inhumane and degrading”; in 2004 we knew the Government had successfully asserted a right to hold innocent people in jail for the rest of their life.

In 2004 we also knew that Mr Howard’s careless statements about “children overboard” and confident assertions about weapons of mass-destruction were just plain wrong. Whether Mr Howard lied or was misled matters little. Both possibilities are equally alarming: were we led into war by

deceit or by mistake? Is our leader dishonest or incompetent? Which should make us more relaxed and comfortable?

That is how it stood at the time of the election on 9 October 2004 and the people made their choice. That the electorate increased Mr Howard's majority conveys an unmistakable message: lying is okay, as long as you achieve your objective; human rights matter less than a \$600 family bonus; self-interest trumps everything else.

Terry McCrann (Herald-Sun, 12 October 2004) unleashed a full-blooded attack on those members of the press gallery who had criticized Howard during the election campaign. He concluded that the "Howard haters" misread ordinary Australians.

He was right, and that is the tragedy. Those journalists did misread ordinary Australians. So did I and many others. Like them, I always thought we were better than that.

This country has a proud history and vast potential. But our most basic values have been betrayed - debased by a government which asks for trust and repays it with hypocrisy and deceit.

This is why A Just Peninsula is so reassuring, indeed inspiring. It shows that where there is a real sense of community, ordinary Australians are still living the ideals and values we were once proud of. Those people illustrate the truth of another comment by Edmund Burke: "No one could make a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little".

Most of us can only do a little. When many do what they can, the result is huge. Mornington Peninsula is a proud example; this publication is the proof.

December 2005

PAINTING BY KATE DURHAM



SPEECH AT “A JUST PENINSULA” PROJECT LAUNCH BY THE MAYOR OF MORNINGTON PENINSULA SHIRE, COUNCILLOR BRIAN STAHL OAM JP

Welcome to the Mornington Peninsula Shire. May I start by acknowledging the traditional owners of this land.

Today is a day of celebration. We're marking the International Day of Human Rights by launching "A Just Peninsula", a book written by members of the community, about the broad range of ways that they are supporting a socially just, multicultural Australia.

On December 10 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 1 of the Declaration states that:

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood" – let's add sisterhood to that!

December 18 is International Migrants Day. To quote the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan:

"...International Migrants Day is an opportunity to recognize the enormous contribution migrants have made throughout the centuries to the economies, societies and cultural advancement of countries around the world - and continue to make to this day. Today, it is estimated that one in every 35 persons in the world is a migrant, living and working in a country other than his or her own. All countries have migrants among their population. The work to strengthen and protect the human rights of migrants concerns every one of us."

Locally we acknowledge human rights through implementing our Access and Equity Policy.

Today is one example of the difference policy can make. The Access and Equity Policy guides us in making decisions and taking action. The Shire as an organisation is constantly juggling and negotiating resolution of competing interests over equal rights to the social, environmental and built environments. We are tested on every issue, whether it's the three R's of roads, rates and rubbish, the building of community facilities or provision of services and how we allocate resources. We don't always get it right but I would hope that we are always improving. Council can't do that without the involvement of the broader community. This booklet shows how important it is to work inclusively with organisations and the whole community. I applaud the work and support of Good Shepherd Peninsula in partnership with the Shire in the creation of "A Just Peninsula". The booklet wouldn't exist, however, without the generous time, knowledge and expertise of all the contributors.

We're sometimes referred to as the "Insular Peninsula", either affectionately or disparagingly. This booklet, "A Just Peninsula", is all about us being part of the rest of Australia and the rest of the world.

What happens in other parts of the world affects us, either immediately or eventually, as demonstrated by recent global events. It is vital that the Mornington Peninsula communities embrace cultural diversity. When we diminish the rights of other people, we are also diminishing our own. It's important for our residents to feel comfortable with the rest of the world. Whether we are meeting visitors here or we are the visitors in other people's lands, we need to engage with confidence and in a spirit of equality.

Cultural diversity enriches the lives of us all. As the Mayor of the Mornington Peninsula Shire, I would like to reiterate that everyone is welcome here.

December 2005

project background

AN EXCERPT FROM THE PROJECT LAUNCH SPEECH BY SUSAN BLACKBURN-MITCHELL, GOOD SHEPHERD PENINSULA.

From a gathering in Mornington a few years ago came the idea of acknowledging the social action of this Mornington Peninsula community, particularly in relation to local action supporting refugees and migrants. A primary interest was the 'voice of the community', what was out there, what was being done and why did people do what they did? And for rest of us, how can we support these ongoing community actions?

So a group of people undertook to identify local social action groups with a multicultural focus offering support and understanding. We realized that we probably would not be able to speak to everyone so we brought together a snapshot of groups.

We also sought to find different models of involvement, to show that there are many ways in which to participate in local community action, to have your voice heard, make your statement, take action and share your beliefs - be that by collecting fresh produce and making it available, writing letters and making contact, dispelling myths, understanding the impact of different cultures, being prepared to listen to the story of a life lived differently, or simply becoming better informed.

As a group we simply asked questions and listened. We had a round robin approach; in many cases an interviewer became the interviewed and vice versa. It has taken some time and that is reflected in some of the stories in which circumstances have now changed, but that in itself has added to the strength of the book as an historical document.

The results of our listening and our sharing is in this booklet. Today is not the end of this acknowledgement of our community actions, it is just the beginning.

This booklet will require updating quite regularly. We invite you to contribute; we invite you to let us know what is happening in the community.

We invite you today to acknowledge and thank the people who contributed to the development of the booklet and the concept - those who contributed their words, their thoughts, their images and their art; those who interviewed and transcribed; those who re-typed; those who proof read; those who edited and those who have supported the project.

December 2005

ROSEMARIE DRAPER RECEIVING A VICTORIAN SERVICE DELIVERY AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS 2004



AN EXCERPT FROM THE PROJECT LAUNCH SPEECH BY MARILYN WEBSTER, MANAGER, SOCIAL POLICY AND RESEARCH, GOOD SHEPHERD PENINSULA.

Firstly I would like to acknowledge the original owners of this land.

It is a very great pleasure to be here today to support the launch of “A Just Peninsula”, another example of our partnership with Peninsula Shire. Good Shepherd has had a long history of cooperative endeavours with Mornington Peninsula Shire and we greatly value them...

...Congratulations are due to the people whose inspirational stories are brought together in “A Just Peninsula”. Each story demonstrates the wisdom, commitment and energy of those residents who care about building a just and inclusive society. Each story demonstrates that a just and peaceful community lies in the knowledge and ideas of people who are directly impacted.

Let us look at what is happening at Cronulla. It is too early to identify the antecedents of the violence we have seen over the past few days or indeed how it might have been prevented. What is clear is that we desperately need the kind of leadership that brings people together rather than the kind of leadership that seeks to exploit differences for personal or political gain. I hope that this is the leadership that will emerge and that it will look to local initiatives such as “A Just Peninsula” for preventing discord and creating an inclusive community.

December 2005

REFUGEE SCENE FROM ANTHROPOSALATA



from awareness to action

BY BONNIE EINSIEDEL

LOCAL MORNINGTON PENINSULA RESIDENT AND STUDENT

I first became interested in social justice issues when my mother and I attended an informative meeting about refugees and asylum seekers (with speakers such as Pamela Curr) on the Mornington Peninsula when I was twelve.

After that we attended several more such meetings and I became more involved when my mother helped to set up Getting Fresh Peninsula with a friend, which grew into a small group of people taking local produce to the Dandenong Asylum Seekers' Centre weekly. Through this connection I was able to spend time with asylum seekers and realised that they were normal people who, unlike other Australians, had been forced to flee their homes due to persecution.

This contact with asylum seekers was a real eye-opener for me, and so was discussing the issue with people my age. To my surprise the majority of the Australians I knew thought asylum seekers were, "illegal immigrants", "queue jumpers" who threw their children overboard. I only had to look at the media to see the source of these views. The media, along with the Government, had successfully demonised a minority.

Initially I felt powerless against the many people I knew who had strong anti-refugee views. But the more meetings I went to, the more I realised there were also many Australians who felt ashamed of the way asylum seekers and refugees had been treated and were making a difference.

I became more involved in campaigning for human rights and other causes when I was 14, joining the Social Service Team at school and, with a friend, co-ordinating Jeans for Genes Day for Years 7-12.

I attended several SWAN meetings (Southern Women's Action Network), wrote to politicians, started my own social justice group, attended rallies and visited the Dandenong Asylum Seekers' Centres whenever possible, donating food and clothes and talking to the asylum seekers. I decorated the inside of my locker at school with 'No War' material and asylum seeker related posters, generating some controversy! I wrote to two asylum seekers in Baxter Immigration Detention Facility in South Australia; one whom I am still writing to is currently living in Sydney on a Temporary Protection Visa.

During 2004 I spent my Year 10 School Work Experience Week at Good Shepherd Youth and Family Services (Hastings) with a dedicated and dynamic Community Development Worker, Susan Blackburn-Mitchell. The week was a fantastic experience and further confirmed my belief that I wanted to work helping people in the future.

During the September holidays I spent a short time as a volunteer at Urban Seed, a mission for the homeless in Collins Street, Melbourne. This was also an extremely worthwhile experience and I hope to go back in the future.

Things really took off for me at the end of 2004/beginning of 2005. I was awarded the SWAN Bursary for a young woman of the community to further her communication skills. I was also short listed for the Oaktree Foundation Poverty Study Tour 2005 (in South Africa) and went to Melbourne for a filmed interview with three Oaktree volunteers, one of them being Hugh Evans – Young Australian of the Year 2004! After the devastating Tsunami struck in December 2004, I initiated a school fundraising project to raise money to rebuild a school, destroyed by the tsunami in Sri Lanka. And I was a Zone Finalist in the Lion's Youth of the Year Competition 2005.

I am not sure what I want to do in the future, though it will involve human rights and I will continue to be involved in social justice issues while completing my VCE. After Year 12 I have been recommended to study law and there is a strong possibility I may be representing asylum seekers/refugees in the future.

global and local:

A RESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE BY ROSEMARIE DRAPER

Rosemarie Draper is a long term Mornington Peninsula resident who received a Service Delivery Award at the Victorian Awards for Excellence in Multicultural Affairs in 2004.

A Just Peninsula provides an important historical "snapshot" about "ordinary" Mornington Peninsula residents who are extraordinary in their commitments to social justice. Their involvement in a range of local and global activities aimed at doing something positive, which improves the lives of others, is impressive.

I believe the desire for justice and to help others is in itself not so extraordinary. Unfortunately, however, I think the busy lives most of us now lead, many people find it difficult to even begin to think about taking on anything extra. This, combined with directions that some government policies have taken us, has led to many of us fearing anyone we see as different from ourselves. To many, mandatory detention of asylum seekers now seems a normal response; the spectre of terrorism has sadly left us with a society where ideas such as community activism, multiculturalism and social justice might seem old fashioned and quaint concepts.

I'm not sure where my personal passion for multiculturalism and social justice came from, but it must have originated in my family background. My journey to the Mornington Peninsula was perhaps atypical. I was born in post second world war democratic Burma. My heritage is partly Burmese, French, Scottish, English and Indian. Whilst my parents were Catholic, my extended family held faiths including Church of England, Buddhist and Muslim. In 1962 there was a brutal military coup in Burma; this repressive situation is sadly ongoing. Fortunately my family recognised the dangers and fled Burma in 1964. Due to the urgency we went to Britain. We had automatic rights of abode there, but Australia was where my mother hoped to go.

During the mid 60's and 70's I grew up in London, surrounded by people from all around the world, such as Ireland, Poland, Malta and Italy. There were also people with Afro-Caribbean and Asian heritage like Jamaica, Dominica, Guyana, India, Sri Lanka and that was just at school! Outside school my friendship circles were, at times, even more diverse. Then when my cousins married people who were Canadian, Spanish, Jewish and Rastafarian my family became even more multicultural. No wonder I grew up debating issues about racism, apartheid, the black power movement and the "troubles" in Ireland.

Whilst I was immersed in my melting pot life, my mother followed through on her wish to emigrate to Australia and we were accepted and sailed on one of the last passenger ships filled with "ten pound Poms" reaching Australia in 1976. In Australia we lived in Elwood and Springvale where my family and I befriended Eastern European Jews, Ocker Australians, Italians, Greeks, people from Indo-China, South America, the Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia and Ethiopia.

Little wonder then that after I married my partner I went travelling to see the places my friends and family had come from. Six and a half years later, when we had returned and started a family, we came down to live on the Mornington Peninsula because of family ties here.

I loved the Peninsula but I was a little hesitant. I had heard it called the "Insular Peninsula" and wondered with my very mixed heritage about how my children and I would fit in and whether I would find others with similar beliefs. At the time I viewed the area as a predominantly White monocultural area, where cultural diversity was at best considered irrelevant and more often considered with suspicion or as a threat, rather than something to be celebrated.

While I am not denying that in some ways I did find these pre-conceptions to be valid and have experienced some overt as well as subtler racist and xenophobic attitudes since I have moved here,

this book is a celebration of how wrong and prejudiced my views were in many other ways! There is a far greater diversity - whether cultural or in thought and action - than I ever anticipated.

I have been privileged to get to know and make friends with many people who are involved in the activities and organisations featured in this booklet. The Peninsula is full of people who are also saddened by the direction that policies on refugees and migrants have taken or who simply want to address some of the problems of this world. They are willing to make time in their lives to take steps, however small they first seem, to make a difference in the lives of others in Australia and our less affluent global neighbours

I hope by documenting their work that whoever reads about it, will find their efforts as inspiring as I have and will consider getting involved in some of these initiatives in some way.

Your involvement can be as big or as small as you want or need it to be, depending on your personal life demands. It may be that you can support some of the fundraisers, with the range offered there is sure to be something which appeals. Or go along to one of the meetings or events to find out more about the issues. People with more time, may wish to volunteer in some way or join a committee.

Whatever your contribution, I know it will be valued and welcomed, as it is only by individuals supporting these groups and projects, in some way, that they can continue and develop.

I thank the Mornington Peninsula Shire and the Good Shepherd Peninsula for putting these perspectives and models of community action on the Peninsula in print. I look forward to growing older here and seeing what the future holds for all of us.....

what is social justice ?

BY ROBERTO MORALES

FROM GOOD SHEPHERD SOCIAL JUSTICE CENTRE AND
YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICE

I believe that each person has a different concept about social justice according to their needs, their interests or according to political, economic and social conditions that affect their environment.

For me, social justice is about people having equal opportunities to access resources, to have equal rights and guarantees, to be respected, to be taken into account in the national decisions that affect the common interests of all the population.

I come from El Salvador where social justice did not exist, firstly because the resources of the country are not abundant and also because what resources there were, went into the hands of the few "privileged" families. The deep social injustice in my country meant that people had to make tremendous decisions to take up arms to transform that unjust reality. The cost of that transformation was twelve years of a bloody and horrible war with a result of more than 72,000 people dead, 8,000 people missing and more than a million people living in exile.

The situation in my country meant I brought my family here to Australia as refugees, with the firm dream and hope to find a better place to live, to find an Australia that prospers and has social justice. Then I see that Australia has a policy against asylum seekers.

I reaffirm that social justice is the responsibility of all, it does not matter what concept that we have, nor our social status or our economic position: we have a commitment to construct a world where we can all live with opportunities, respect and dignity because that is social justice.

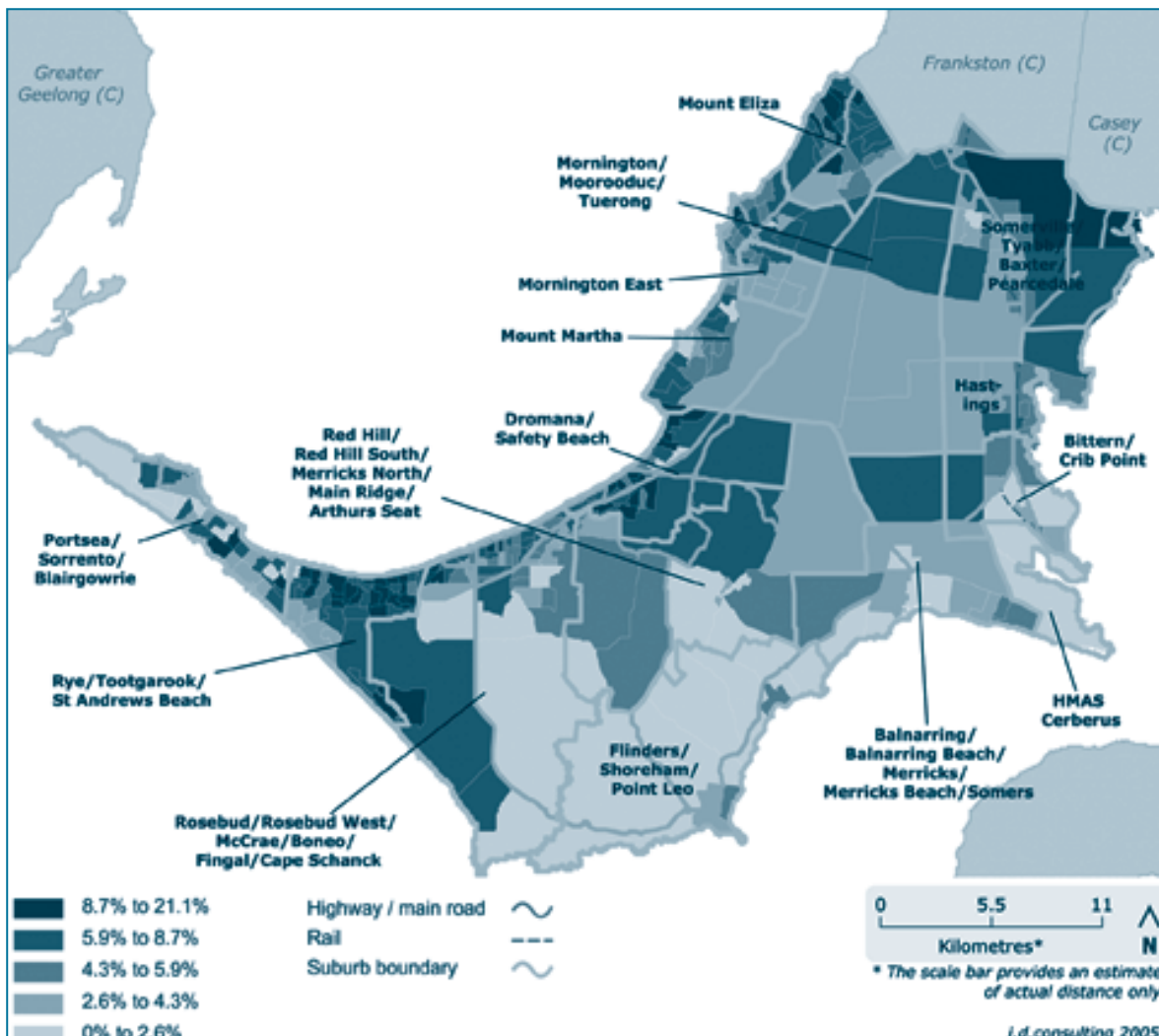
about the mornington peninsula

The Mornington Peninsula is located just over an hour's drive away from the City, on Melbourne's "doorstep", and is often described as "Melbourne's Playground". It is the most popular informal recreational area in Victoria.

The Mornington Peninsula is a boot-shaped promontory separating two contrasting bays: Port Phillip and Western Port. "The Peninsula", as it is affectionately known to local residents, contains a diversity of scenic landscapes and is almost surrounded by the sea, with coastal boundaries of over 190 kilometres. It is a mixture of urban areas, resort towns, tourist development and rural land.

The Shire's population in 2005 is approximately 140,000 people, which increases up to 240,000 in the peak season (summer). In 2001, at the time of the last census, the Mornington Peninsula Shire had 7,037 residents with a Non-English Speaking Background (NESB), which represented 5.6% of the Shire's total population.

MORNINGTON PENINSULA SHIRE - PERSONS FROM A NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING BACKGROUND AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION.



Persons with a Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) 2001		Total		
		Number	Population	Per Cent
Area 1	Balnarring Balnarring Beach Merricks / Merricks Beach Somers	128	3,711	3.5
Area 2	Bittern / Crib Point	175	5,601	3.1
Area 3	Dromana / Safety Beach	649	7,490	8.7
Area 4	Flinders / Shoreham Point Leo	43	1,825	2.3
Area 5	Hastings	312	6,512	4.8
Area 6	HMAS Cerberus	36	1,606	2.2
Area 7	Mornington East	462	9,580	4.8
Area 8	Mornington Moorooduc / Tuerong	775	13,242	5.8
Area 9	Mount Eliza	1,146	16,110	7.1
Area 10	Mount Martha	438	8,406	5.2
Area 11	Portsea / Sorrento Blairgowrie	196	3,802	5.2
Area 12	Red Hill / Red Hill South Merricks North Main Ridge / Arthurs Seat	131	3,027	4.3
Area 13	Rosebud / Rosebud West McCrae / Boneo Fingal / Cape Schanck	991	18,270	5.4
Area 14	Rye / Tootgarook St Andrews Beach	886	10,566	8.4
Area 15	Somerville / Tyabb Baxter / Pearcedale	658	15,109	4.4
Mornington Peninsula Shire		7,037	124,891	5.6
Melbourne SD		712,704	3,338,704	21.3

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2001

peninsula refugee and asylum seeker support (PRASS)

AN INTERVIEW WITH JIM GIBSON

INTERVIEWER: JODIE KEWLEY

HOW WAS PRASS FORMED ?

The seeds for PRASS were first sown in October 2001 when Jim and other members of the Mount Eliza Inter-Church Council organised a series of Community Forums to encourage a broader understanding about the issues surrounding refugees and asylum seekers. "At that time, the media was making a big thing about the problems asylum seekers were facing getting into the country. We decided to follow it up on a local basis." Entitled 'The World Perspective', 'The Australian Perspective' and 'What Can We Do?', the forums were very well attended.

According to Jim, "A number of people came away wanting to do something practical, so, early the following year, we held a meeting regarding what we could do, what structure we should adopt. PRASS really developed from that."

Those who attended that first meeting, some of whom were already active in the refugee field, decided on a loose structure for the organisation, 'one in which members' skills would determine how they could best assist refugees'. The focus was on practical support. It included letter writing and advocacy, teaching English, fundraising, collecting and distributing goods and food, and supporting refugees when they came out of detention.

Over time, PRASS has developed strong links with other organisations, such as The Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project, the Hotham Mission, The Refugee Council, and the Mornington Peninsula Shire. It has enjoyed close contact with David Spitteler from the Dandenong Asylum Seekers Centre, providing him with financial and practical support, including helping him find larger premises from which to work at the Trinity Uniting Church in Dandenong. Other programs were conducted from there, including the distribution of resources from a storage depot and a training course for English tutors.

WHAT DOES PRASS DO ?

Jim Gibson, a former Human Resources Manager, is Chairman of the Peninsula Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support (PRASS), a non-profit organisation that provides a range of assistance to refugees and asylum seekers both in the community and in detention.

When I met with Jim to learn more about the organisation, he was reflecting on the success of a recent lunch PRASS had held as a gesture of hospitality for members of the Afghan community living in Frankston.

"The aim of the lunch was to develop a contact with that community so they'd feel part of a wider community, and to establish important links for the future," he said. In fact, it went so well that Jim plans to encourage the Refugee Council of Australia to run them in other areas.

PRASS is active in all of these areas and Jim takes a very hands-on role, helping to pack up the truck hired to collect all the furniture and other household goods members donate to refugees, speaking about refugees and asylum seekers at public forums, lobbying MPs and co-writing the organisation's Emailed newsletter with the Treasurer and Secretary, Gordon Barrow.

THE AIMS OF PRASS

Asked about the aims of PRASS, Jim Gibson said, "We are not into developing mission statements. Our aim is to just continue to provide practical support depending on members' skills and to communicate our interest in and concern for refugees. We're not a formal advocacy body. We're an action group."

WHO CAN JOIN PRASS ? WHEN DO YOU MEET ?

There is no criterion for PRASS membership and no fee involved in joining. What interests PRASS is the skills new members bring with them: "Show us what skills you have and we'll support you."

PRASS now has one hundred members on its mailing list, from Sorrento through to Frankston, and support for the organisation is much wider than just the church community. Meetings are held twice or three times a year, to which speakers who have some association with refugees and will extend members' knowledge of the issues are invited.

The meetings are held at the Uniting Church in Mount Eliza and are open to anyone who is interested.

HOW CAN PEOPLE ASSIST PRASS ?

Donations of good quality household goods, personal care and household cleaning products, non-perishable food and phone cards will all assist.

A PERSONAL PROFILE

Jim, who 'retired' in 1982, is no newcomer to the field of social justice and charity. He and his wife, Rosemary, have a long history of involvement in child sponsorship and in overseas aid, including with Oxfam, Community Aid Abroad, Save The Children Fund and Action Aid. (Action Aid developed a range of project activities 'for those who have less', one of them being a crossbreeding program to improve dairy cattle quality on the Indian Subcontinent). He and Rosemary have also been active locally, establishing the Mount Eliza Community Contact of which Jim was President for 15 years. But these days, most of their time is taken up with Mount Eliza Churches Community Service Inc, a volunteer community transport service, and with PRASS.

Jim's voluntary work is simply an extension of his belief that helping others is what "the purpose of life is all about" and that "everyone should help someone." Through his work with PRASS, he has gained the satisfaction of knowing that he has helped settle someone into the community. "We just have to continue to make refugees and asylum seekers feel comfortable - these people have nothing."

PRASS LUNCH WITH MEMBERS OF THE AUSTRALIAN AFGHAN COMMUNITY IN FRANKSTON



southern women's action network (SWAN)

AN INTERVIEW WITH JUDITH COUACAUD GRALEY

INTERVIEWER: SUSAN BLACKBURN-MITCHELL

HOW WAS SWAN FORMED ?

SWAN was formed by a small number of women who thought that the issues of social justice were not being addressed on the Mornington Peninsula. So we had a breakfast one morning at Mount Martha Community House.

We reconvened in my dining room a couple of weeks after that. We talked about issues ranging from the role of women in welfare, to the subject of mothers and children and how to find balance.

We came up with the idea of the Southern Women Action Network. We wanted to include women from the Mornington Peninsula, and also people from the southern part of the area, because we found there were women from Frankston and Seaford, and areas like that, who also felt it was very difficult to get to town.

We wanted to make the group as dynamic and multi-faceted as possible, and so came up with 'Southern Women's Action Network'. Our first formal SWAN meeting drew one hundred women. This set SWAN on its way. We've continued to invite wonderful women to speak at SWAN and I don't think there has been one who hasn't inspired all the hundreds of women that have come along to SWAN in the last nine years.

WHAT DOES SWAN DO ?

SWAN is a gathering of women who meet regularly with a view to being better informed about community and social justice issues that are local, through to world issues - issues that encompass subjects as diverse as the environment, human rights, and women and work.

SWAN has been involved in a number of actions over the years, including a social audit of people's needs on the Mornington Peninsula and a conference about increasing women's participation in decision making, such as becoming a local government councillor to being involved on committees.

We organise a range of actions including petitions, letter writing campaigns, sales of craft for fundraising etc. There is an information share table where everyone is encouraged to bring items for distribution, and an opportunity to tell people about particular issues of community concern.

We also hold forums, on issues that men and women want to hear about. For instance, we were concerned about being informed about the war in Iraq and we had speakers come to a meeting attended by 220 people. We've had a number of women speak at community meetings about conflict in their country of origin. We have had community meetings about domestic violence. We've discussed the war in Iraq, personal safety in the local environment, sexual harassment in the workplace, AFL footballers, and we realised that the theme of violence kept coming up, so that is something we will work on. We are also planning a special event in getting to know and understand the life and lifestyle of Muslim women in Australia.

We invited people to speak on asylum seekers and refugees and provided funds for organisations that were working in the area. We create opportunities for SWAN members to get information about how they can make a difference at their local community level, whether it be going to the church, collecting food to be delivered to the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, or providing information about tutoring opportunities. SWAN women went to Dandenong, teaching English to people from ethnic backgrounds.

SWAN women recently went to lunch with some refugees, an experience they enjoyed. One woman was heard to note, "meeting refugees you just realise how difficult their situation is - why would you put yourself through this if it wasn't to escape something dreadful".

Many SWAN members write letters to newspapers and politicians, write to and visit people in detention centres, and speak out on radio programs about refugees. These are just some examples of how SWAN members use their skills to raise community awareness.

We had a young woman from Afghanistan who came and explained to us what it was really like to live in Afghanistan. This meeting engaged a whole lot of people in an issue they would not normally have access to, and they could go away to talk to their friends and continue to raise public awareness.

THE AIMS OF SWAN

The philosophy of SWAN is twofold. Put simply it is about raising awareness and empowerment. Empowerment is really important. Giving people information is a form of empowering people, and it's wonderful to see women grow up in SWAN.

SWAN is a place for everybody to air their views, and at times different views, but we can have differences of opinion without feeling we are not welcome in the group.

WHO CAN JOIN SWAN ? WHEN DO YOU MEET ?

SWAN is a women's - only group for all ages. Bi-monthly meetings are on a Sunday morning at Mornington Secondary College. Meetings consist of juice and muffins etc, then a speaker covering a variety of issues, followed by a chance to hear about what is happening and what is important to our community with the share table. There is a raffle with funds going to a community concern and often there is a purchase table for a community organisation. Start time is 9.30am. Speakers are at 10am. RSVP's are necessary.

A convening group organises things, such as speakers, meetings dates and hall bookings, food, the logistics of the meetings, the agenda and contacting the speakers. Young people are especially encouraged to attend through the establishment of the SWAN Community Participation Encouragement Bursary to help young women to get involved in speaking out on issues of social justice.

HOW CAN PEOPLE ASSIST SWAN ?

We now tape some of the meetings and these available at a small cost, with the help of the local radio station. People can then hear the speakers if they cannot attend, or simply rehear the talks. We need a PA system with an inbuilt microphone, which will be quite expensive. Some members are experiencing hearing loss and they'd appreciate an opportunity to purchase at a nominal cost a tape or CD so they could hear the speaker again. So we also need a burner for that.

Another way to be involved is to suggest speakers and issues; maybe we are not catering for everyone, and if SWAN is about opportunity we want it to be broader. We are always open to suggestions about speakers.

There are other groups looking for small amounts of money and SWAN assists with disbursement and active assistance. We send items to a number of asylum seeker support organisations so donations of personal care and household cleaning products, non-perishable food, new toys and phone cards will assist.

A PERSONAL PROFILE

Judith reflects on how much each of the women has given to her in her own personal development, and she hopes that she has reciprocated for many of them. Judith says she takes strength from the fact that she has such a fabulous sisterhood around her that has enabled her to be more confident in being a little bit more outspoken, taking a few more risks in her personal community life.

Judith is constantly interested in issues, and thinking about how can we do things better. "I sometimes say to my own children 'Who knows what is around the corner we could all be refugees one day, do you want that other country to extend to you the hand of welcome?' It's that sense of trying to make the world a better place."

AN INTERVIEW WITH MAUREEN McPHATE & VAL MCKENNA, SWAN PARTICIPANTS INTERVIEWER: FRANCES RULE

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED WITH YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH ASYLUM SEEKERS ?

Maureen We both attended a meeting (a few years ago) that was addressed by Julian Burnside QC as guest speaker with his wife Kate Durham and we were very moved by Julian's representation of the plight of refugees. Julian said even just the small matter of writing a letter to asylum seekers was helpful and reassuring.

WHAT MOVED YOU TO GET ACTIVE IN THAT WAY ?

Val Well, I guess, my conscience; I thought this is being done in my name in this country. I was so ashamed. Also friends were having a demonstration at Maribrynong, so we demonstrated at the Maribrynong Centre. It wasn't until I really saw the razor wire and the bars and the people peering from barred windows that I realised how horrible it was.

Maureen The impact of being part of that was immense. You know it was Mothers Day and a few of the group took flowers and wanted to be allowed to pass in flowers for the women and the officers wouldn't allow the flowers. It was just so eerie and evil looking.

Val Kate Durham spoke at SWAN and Julian Burnside QC came with her. She talked about the BBC documentary she had made when she went to Nauru with a British journalist, and I can't imagine anyone would look at that tape and see those people in boats and the way they were treated and not be ashamed to be Australian. The documentary tape is still available from Kate: the BBC has shown it, the ABC wouldn't. Australia is the only country it hasn't been shown in. Even SBS has been approached and initially they were interested, but still nothing.

Maureen We send the asylum seekers writing paper and stamped self addressed envelopes, until we know what else to send them. I had quite good communication with a refugee on Nauru, who wrote that he had been a teacher in Iran, and when we asked what could we send he requested an English dictionary, because he would like to teach some of the others, although they hoped they would not be there for long.

My daughter in Queensland was writing to two young girls who were with their mother in Port Hedland and the girls had been there for two and a half years. One girl had started some English study and was doing quite well at school: she was 14. My daughter Ann suggested I start writing to her mother, and she'd read the letters to her, and that started a very warm communication exchange with 'Julie' (name withheld), who was so depressed and had a terrible life. She had an injury and they said she couldn't go from Port Hedland down to Perth for medical treatment because it was not urgent enough. She was guarded about what it was, she said if she makes too much fuss they wouldn't let her have some of the work. I kept ringing Port Hedland to speak to 'Julie', and I'd be put through and was always told she was not able to speak now and you wonder why, and finally I kept persisting and finally I was told she was gone. She was released, but people who were supporting her in Canberra had to pay airfares to get them out of Port Hedland. They had literally opened the gate and the women and two children were ushered out and left.

Val That is one of the things that people don't understand - that they are put out and they are not helped out at all. They are just dumped on charity really.

Maureen 'Julie's' letters straight after that told me that she had nothing, she was not allowed to work and was dependent on the family who took them in and looked after them. So she is still going through appeals and courts, they have dismissed her appeals to try and get a visa. But we have continual contact and I can send money via the Canberra Refugee Support to help with schooling for the girls. The two girls are at school and 'Julie's' learning English. She loves cooking so I sent her a parcel of things that would be good for the kitchen.

Val My experience is with 'Alan' (name withheld) who was at Villawood, he is an Iranian poet. He sent me some of his poetry which was very sad and very moving.

He became friendly with some young musicians who were visiting the camp, just to support people. They put some of his poetry to music on a CD which he sent me for Christmas. He got a permanent visa. When he came out he had post traumatic stress syndrome: he was taken in by a psychiatrist and his family because he had shocking depression. But now he is studying and he sounds better. I spoke to him recently and he says apart from studying he is trying to help all his friends who are still there. He has been donating any money he makes from his poetry to the children in detention. They are really wonderful people. They have built up a supportive network within the camp.

I think people need to know they are not "illegals", they have a perfect right to seek sanctuary in our country and that is one of the biggest lies that has been perpetrated on the Australian people .

Over three hundred people drowned on one old leaky boat, and then there was the Tampa incident. I can't understand how anyone who watched that could not be moved to anger about what was done, because these people in the most desperate of circumstances were lied to, they were put on another boat, The Menura, and then they were shoved into the hold for twenty-three days in the most appalling conditions and were eventually taken to Nauru.

It's not changing, there are still eighty children on Nauru, there is a playground there that cannot be used because if the children went out to play they would be burned to a crisp. Some days the water is only available for an hour a day and it's brackish. It's the most appalling conditions, far worse than being in prison, and I think one of the worse things is that at least if you're in prison you know how long you are there for. People in detention have no idea how long they will be there so it takes away their hope, it's just day after day of not knowing.

In a sense there is no future, they cannot plan. I was talking to someone one day who said "but they're Muslims - aren't you afraid of Muslims?" and I said "but they are human beings". I think this fear is being fed into the community. Why weren't people allowed contact? Why weren't journalists allowed to photograph people on the Tampa? They were just dots on the decks. If they had been shown to the Australian people as real, human beings with children suffering with diarrhoea and vomiting and food poisoning, most Australians probably would have felt sympathy, but they were just dots on the boat. Even the navy staff who rescued them were forbidden to speak about it.

DROWNED MAN BY KATE DURHAM



doing justice

st andrews anglican church, somerville

AN INTERVIEW WITH COLIN VALENTINE

INTERVIEWER: SUSAN BLACKBURN-MITCHELL

HOW WAS DOING JUSTICE FORMED ?

The group was formed about four years ago. I had a talk with Scott Holmes, the Vicar at the time, and he was keen to create space for parishioners to have opportunities to think about justice issues. So we started off by doing monthly newsletters or inserts into the church bulletin under the heading "Doing Justice" and developed a symbol which is a broken chain that symbolizes the fact that doing justice is about breaking the chains that bind communities and individuals. For the first couple of years when there was a fifth Sunday of the month we would take responsibility for that evening and have a get together that was around a justice theme.

WHAT DOES DOING JUSTICE DO ?

At the moment we are in abeyance, but it's usual to meet regularly to speak about issues of concern and take action. A lot of what we do is about raising issues, helping people understand and giving practical ways of following up whether - it's by letter writing, petitions or raising money.

We were involved in a food project for East Timor. The project had fridge magnets, which we sold and raised about \$150. For six months we've had a campaign where people from the parish can bring along cleaning items for the Dandenong Asylum Seekers Centre. We were able to give David Spitteler, from the Asylum Seekers Centre, large cartons of collected goods.

We wanted to raise money for Anglicorp, which is a social justice arm of the Anglican Church, for Sudan, Darfur and the Asylum Seeker Center. We had an outline of Sudan and for three Sundays we encouraged people to donate gold coins to fill out the country outline. We raised \$400 dollars from people donating their gold coins which meant we could contribute \$200 to David Spitteler and \$200 to Anglicorp.

We have been involved in raising awareness around the Jubilee Campaign (a campaign aimed at eliminating world poverty). We've looked at the issues of indigenous Australians and try to give people an opportunity to think about the story for our indigenous people, where that story comes from. Soon we'll be hearing from Christine Carolan at The Good Shepherd Social Justice Network, looking at the issues around children in detention.

THE AIMS OF DOING JUSTICE

It is about trying to create an opportunity to gather. It's also about having space for people in the church and the parish to make connections between spirituality which is often very personalized and justice issues which is about looking beyond ourselves, and to recognize that there are situations in our world when we need to try and bridge the gap between spirituality and justice. So that's why it's called "Doing Justice". It's also based on a passage in the Old Testament, Micah 6:8 that says 'The Lord require for you only this, to do justice, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God'.

WHO CAN JOIN DOING JUSTICE ? WHEN DO YOU MEET ?

We are not currently meeting but we did meet in Somerville in the Church Hall, on the third Sunday of every month. There was no cost to attend. The planning group started with two people and ended up with five, which was a good number. It's important to meet regularly to plan what's happening and to look at some of those issues that need a response.

At one of our earlier Sunday at Six gatherings, we had David Spitteler from the Asylum Seekers

Centre to speak. He brought a Sudanese family with him, because we had been doing lots around the issues of Asylum Seekers and the Sudanese Refugees. We had about twenty people and some of those may not have been parishioners but they heard about it from other contacts.

The meeting model was – meet at six o'clock, hear from the guest speaker, which usually took about twenty minutes and then have time for questions. It's best not to have a late night and hopefully to finish about seven o'clock so a usual meeting would be one hour. Having a meal is a good action, especially if there is a particular theme. We did some action, for example, around Fresh Water for Zambia so we had a Zambian meal, but really we just tried to keep it simple.

The planning group was fairly small but people were really keen to try and make sense of the connection between justice and spirituality. There's lots more that we could have done but I think it's a bit of a time factor. I'm keen to look at developing some sort of a weekend or day forum that could be auspiced to give other groups an opportunity to come and showcase what it is that they do and give the broader community an opportunity to find out ways in which they can be involved in justice issues. Grabbing the 'bull by the horns' and exploring the bull that is often associated with justice issues.

I'm happy to receive calls from people interested in social justice and keen to be restart my involvement in community discussions and actions.

HOW CAN PEOPLE ASSIST DOING JUSTICE WHEN IT RESTARTS ?

Mostly we would be looking at continuing on with supporting the Asylum Seekers Centre, that is our primary focus in terms of receiving goods - but who knows what might come out over the next few months? There are some other and different groups and organisations we might look at that are needing practical assistance. People can just come and be part of our group and our actions.

A PERSONAL PROFILE

Colin was on the Doing Justice planning team, provided motivation and was a bit of a driving force, providing enthusiasm and ideas and then trying to create space for others to be actively involved as well. In his field of work, Colin co-ordinates the family support programs for Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service on the Mornington Peninsula, where he's been for more than ten years.

Colin and his partner were living in Frankston and actively involved in the Anglican Church in Somerville for seven plus years. They've since moved to the Mornington Peninsula and another parish. Their spirituality is very important, but it's also about being connected through their spirituality and the issues that impact on the community, together with the world that they live in locally, nationally and internationally.

As Colin became more involved in this particular Christian worship community he started to think about what he could contribute to the community in light of some of the other involvements that he had. Plus trying to make sense of a connection between spirituality, theology and relationships with God and to understand issues of justice.

Colin was many years ago particularly taken by a saying by Dom Helder Camara a Brazilian Catholic Bishop, "When I gave food to the poor they called me a saint, but when I asked why the poor had no food they called me a communist". That phrase helped him try to make sense of the dominant forces that impacted and influenced the community and society and where the church fitted into that, because he feels that one of the things that challenges him is that often the church is seen as on the side of the status quo - and is often the oppressor. He feels that that is where Liberation Theology is really important in "challenging some of the thinking about almost justifying injustice because we can sanction things through calling on God the Bible or whatever". For Colin it is important to think these things through and challenge some of those assumptions.



Colin's sense is that there is a spirit of people wanting things to be different. What keeps him going is that he thinks that there is a kernel, a small group of people within our community who want to challenge injustices and he believes that "small drops all working together make can make a really big ocean". It's about recognizing that optimism and that hope.

Colin would like to share a saying about hope from St Luke's a welfare agency in Bendigo, which he heard during some training related to his work with Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service.

- H Helping
- O Others
- P Possibilities
- E Emerge

Colin feels that this is a really key part of social justice. "It's about working alongside disadvantaged communities and people so that other possibilities can emerge."

afghani women's group

AN INTERVIEW WITH FIONA MCCORMACK

INTERVIEWER: ANNABEL FEGAN

HOW WAS THE AFGHANI WOMEN'S GROUP FORMED ?

The Afghani Women's Group started in the same year as WHISE (Women's Health in the South East), in 1992. WHISE uses a dual strategy to improve women's health by working with health practitioners and also the community. During a consultation with some female GPs, we learned there was a growing number of Afghani families in the Frankston area and that women were presenting to GPs with a plethora of issues. We therefore decided to try to connect with these women. A consultation for Afghani women was held to identify their needs and out of that came the idea for a group for Afghani women.

WHISE auspices the Afghani women's group. The Afghani community is very supportive of families newly arrived in the area. So the group, which meets regularly, simply provides the opportunity for Afghani women to meet and provide support to one another, learn about the services available to them and to share ideas. The environment is very friendly and supportive. The group is also a contact point for other services or organisations wishing to consult with them.

The group works on a peer support model, which means that rather than having workers run the group, women within the group are provided with training on how to run groups for women (a training package provided by WHISE). This means that women can run the group according to their own culture and language.

Another thing is that through ongoing consultation with the group, we've been able to identify issues affecting them and develop strategies to try to address them. From consultation came initiatives such as a Women's Swimming Program, which offered culturally appropriate, low-cost recreational opportunities. Another initiative was the Interpreter Access Working Party, which was formed to create awareness amongst services about the need to ensure the provision of interpreters when women from non-English speaking backgrounds try to access services. Both these initiatives were beneficial to other women besides Afghani women.

THE AIMS OF THE AFGHANI WOMEN'S GROUP

We believe that women are the experts in issues that impact on their own lives. Therefore the aim of the group is to provide a safe and culturally appropriate opportunity for women to get together, support one another and discuss issues affecting their lives. WHISE has also aimed to build capacity within the group to ensure greater autonomy and self-direction.

WHO CAN JOIN THE AFGHANI WOMEN'S GROUP? WHEN DO YOU MEET ?

The group meets once a month and is open to any Afghani women and attendance is free. There is always an interpreter available to interpret any information provided or in case any requests arise from the group. Any woman who wants to join the group should first make contact with WHISE for information about where and when the group meet (an interpreter will be provided). Details will be taken and calls will be returned.

Should any service or organisation wish to speak with the group, the request should go to WHISE and will then be passed on to the group. WHISE will follow up with their response.

HOW CAN PEOPLE ASSIST THE AFGHANI WOMEN'S GROUP ?

The group doesn't provide material goods to women; the majority of families are supported with material goods upon arrival, but at times specific requests are made such as children's books.

Accommodation is always difficult and if we had access to information about rental properties it would be helpful. Funding has also dried up for the group, so funding assistance would help.



PERSONAL PROFILES

MASOODA AKBARY

Masooda has lived in Australia for thirteen years and comes from the Afghanistan capital, Kabul. She is currently the Volunteer Peer Support Worker for the Afghani Women's Group.

"I came to live in Frankston ten years ago. I felt lonely, as I had no family or networks. I met Hamida Lutfi and she told me about the group. I would like to see many Afghani women attending the group regularly. I would like to see us united and supporting each other.

The aim of the group is to provide Afghani women with the opportunity to socialise and share information in our own language.

I have chosen this group because it provides me with the opportunity to meet with other women from Afghanistan, socialise and talk about interesting health issues."

SHAIMA SHAKOOR

Shaimor lived in Australia for fourteen months and also comes from Kabul.

"The group provides me with the opportunity to talk to other women from my community about health issues affecting Afghani women. I would like to see many other Afghani women attending this group.

I would like more speakers providing health sessions. Together we can find solutions to our health issues. I do not know of any other Afghani Women's Group in this area."

frankston afghan community

AN INTERVIEW WITH SIMON LUTFI

INTERVIEWER: JIM GIBSON

HOW WAS THE FRANKSTON AFGHAN COMMUNITY FORMED ?

Following his arrival in Australia, Simon felt the need to assist others in Afghanistan to come and settle in Australia. Adopting a practical approach he established links with the Department of Immigration and the Australian Council of Churches to provide means of entry to the country, and subsequently became Treasurer of the Afghan Council. He was particularly interested in encouraging families to come to the Frankston area, and in the late 1980s established the Frankston Refugee Settlement Scheme which later became known as the Frankston Afghan Community.

In 1994 the Frankston group was registered with the Department of Immigration.

WHAT DOES THE FRANKSTON AFGHAN COMMUNITY DO ?

In general the Frankston Afghan community provides an active support group and great benefit to its members. Initially the main tasks were focused on encouraging new arrivals from Afghanistan to come to the Frankston area and supporting all arrangements for all necessary regulatory procedures to be followed. Since beginning in 1994 new arrivals have been assisted with entry procedures, made to feel welcome in the area, provided with assistance with accommodation, furniture and household items and given advice on such matters as training in English, arranging bank accounts and available community facilities.

There are now over sixty Afghani families who have settled in Frankston and over the Mornington Peninsula comprising in all around three hundred new citizens all contributing in different ways to the wider community. Younger people have settled in well and with strong support will become excellent citizens.

Recently the group has started supporting a wider variety of new community groups, for instance the last family assisted was from the Sudan.

The organisation provides social cohesion to the community, arranges periodical meetings and supports those in need within the group. An active women's activity chaired ably by Hamida Lutfi, who came to Australia in 1988, encourages social interaction, training in English and courses of common interest such as cooking and sewing. A men's group provides social contact around matters of common interest.

THE AIMS OF THE FRANKSTON AFGHAN COMMUNITY

The primary aim of the Frankston Afghan Community is one of welcome and support for people who come to Australia. Everything the group does is to that end and also to help the families to settle in and become part of the community.

WHO CAN JOIN THE FRANKSTON AFGHAN COMMUNITY ? WHEN DO YOU MEET ?

Anyone can join the community gatherings, most often it's the families that have been supported and community friends, but anyone who is interested in supporting the activities and the new arrivals can attend. The meetings are informal and irregular and are set up by ringing around and then setting a date and place to gather.

HOW CAN PEOPLE ASSIST THE FRANKSTON AFGHAN COMMUNITY ?

Because the main focus is re-establishing family households the things most needed are household items such as furniture and bedding, pots and pans etc.

A PERSONAL PROFILE

Simon left Afghanistan in 1980, moving to Pakistan and then to Italy. From Italy he and his family were sponsored through the Australian Council of Churches to come to Australia. They settled in Frankston in 1985 being the first Afghani family to come to the area, and they were given an opportunity to get a house.

Simon Lufti has been involved with the Frankston Afghan Community since its inception. He established the Afghan community because he and his family personally had so much help and positive assistance when he came to Australia and he wanted to give back to his Frankston community. Simon feels he lives and works in a wonderful community, it's a special place and even when things have been difficult, for instance around September 11, the local community has been supportive and in no way confrontational.

SIMON LUFTI WITH THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PHOTO OF SHARBUTGUL



getting fresh

AN INTERVIEW WITH JODIE KEWLEY

INTERVIEWER: SUSAN BLACKBURN-MITCHELL

HOW WAS GETTING FRESH PENINSULA FORMED ?

I was part of a book club and we read Barbara Kingsolver's "The Poisonwood Bible" set in Africa. As a result, some of us in the book club wanted to do something, help in some way, and felt moved to get involved in fundraising. We looked around at various overseas aid projects and couldn't decide on which to support. Then a couple of us went to a Mornington Peninsula Social Justice Coalition information session about refugees. As a consequence of that session, I considered putting together a book that combined the stories of refugees plus recipes from their homelands, and some members of our book club were happy to support me in that.

In the hope of being put in touch with refugees who might want to share their stories and recipes with us, my friend Helen and I went to meet David Spitteler, the facilitator of the Dandenong Asylum Seekers' Centre. Before leaving the house, I thought to take some avocados from my brother's farm to give to the asylum seekers who sought assistance through the Centre. The avocados were immediately accepted and distributed. There was no other fresh produce, only packaged foods being distributed. We realized that providing fresh produce would be a very practical form of assistance.

In my ignorance, I had assumed that asylum seekers received some government support. It was a shock to learn that many people on bridging visas weren't able to buy basic necessities, let alone fruit and vegetables. My friends and I, on the Mornington Peninsula, might not have a lot of money but most of us have veggie gardens. Supplying home grown produce was a way of contributing without it costing us anything.

The book ended up being less of a priority than the need to supply the Centre with produce for those who had no other means of getting any.

WHAT DOES GETTING FRESH PENINSULA DO ?

Our Getting Fresh Peninsula group of five members has an organised collection of local fresh produce - fruit and vegetables - that are then driven up to the Dandenong Asylum Seekers' Centre. Each member of our informal community group takes a turn to do the food run, travelling from Red Hill, Dromana and Mornington. We collect the produce from shops, from our own gardens - and from those in the community kind enough to donate to us from their own gardens. For instance, we might get a load of pears from a backyard tree groaning with fruit. Some weeks are fantastic and we might have masses of tomatoes or zucchinis: some weeks we are scratching around and at that time we might put some of our own money in to make sure there is something to take up.

We also have a basket outside the fruit shop in Balnarring where people can drop off produce. It has a sign saying it's for items for refugees, plus a little bit of information about where the items go to. There is a regular driving roster and it works out that we each get to go to Dandenong about once a month, usually on Thursday mornings. We try to get there by 9am before the people arrive so that the produce is there waiting for them. We can simply drop off the produce but some of us like to spend some time with the people there.

Late last year we had contact with the Montessori kinder in Frankston who wanted to be involved, and they gathered wrapping paper and ribbons for the Christmas presents that had been donated to the Centre.

THE AIMS OF GETTING FRESH PENINSULA

The aims of Getting Fresh are to encourage the wider community and the group members to provide fresh produce to people associated with the Dandenong Asylum Seekers' Centre, who may not have the money to buy such items. Our group would like to think that eventually we can provide enough produce so that all the children of the families who attend the Dandenong Asylum Seekers' Centre have fresh fruit in their lunch boxes every day.

WHO CAN JOIN GETTING FRESH PENINSULA ?

Anyone can join the group. In terms of meetings we very rarely meet, it's really on a need - to - meet basis. Occasionally when we feel we need new brochures written up we'll have a meeting, but we are not formally organised.

HOW CAN PEOPLE ASSIST GETTING FRESH PENINSULA ?

The group would like more fresh produce to distribute, so if people have goods they have grown themselves or they would like to donate shop-bought fruit and veggies, we would welcome that. We'd be delighted if local home gardeners planted some extra veggie seeds or seedlings, especially in the barren winter time when we are very short of fresh fruit and vegetables. Maybe a small patch of the garden could become a "refugee plot"? Or if people have chooks and can afford to donate a few eggs that would help. It doesn't matter how small the amount is. We can arrange to pick it up, or people can put it in the basket at Balnarring.

We'd also like to hear from shopkeepers who'd be prepared to help, and even places like kindergartens. It seems to us that kinders gather quite a bit of fruit and perhaps if it's going to waste and in good condition it could come to us.

It would be helpful if people could nominate to be in charge of an area, perhaps to be the pick up or drop off person for an area.

Also we are happy to have more people on our driving roster, as it would mean a longer break between food runs, or cover us when unexpected changes come up. Even if people just want to be on an emergency list, that would help. It takes about an hour to get up to Dandenong from our end of the Peninsula, although we sometimes stop to collect produce. The current group is happy to take people up for the first time so they know where to go next time and how it all works.

A PERSONAL PROFILE

Jodie is a fiction and short story writer with a background in social work. She is also a mother of two children, one of whom, Bonnie, wrote the foreword to this book. Jodie combines jointly running a home based business 'Red Hill Muesli' and a business managing and preparing holiday homes for guest accommodation on the Peninsula, with her parenting responsibilities.

Jodie says that writing and running the businesses are both basically home based, but she felt that she was missing the contribution she had made through her social work, missed the contact and communication with people in need, and doing something worthwhile. She now enjoys meeting new people through Getting Fresh Peninsula, especially those from different cultures and mixing with the wider community.

"I really enjoy going up to Dandenong. It's so different. It's not just going from a rural to an urban setting but from a monocultural area to a multicultural one. When I can, I take my children with me so they can see that there are different ways of being connected with their community. We also do things as a family like going to eating places from other cultures. We recently went to an Ethiopian restaurant where we had to eat with our hands, and everything was served on one plate. Although I love travelling overseas, it isn't always necessary to buy an aeroplane ticket to experience a different culture, you can simply go to Footscray."

anthroposalata unlimited

AN INTERVIEW WITH AMALIA SINTIHAKI

INTERVIEWER: ROSEMARIE DRAPER AND SUSAN BLACKBURN - MITCHELL

“Anthroposalata” is a name that is unusual, unique, funny and yet meaningful. It is a mouthful. It means human salad, and it goes deeper than it sounds. It is a symbolic name.

To make a nourishing salad you must have a variety of salad vegetables, different in colour, shape and size. You mix them in a bowl and dress them, so they can bring out their juices, resulting in a meal very rich in vitamins and minerals that can sustain people’s lives. You can add various herbs for an exotic taste, which can drive your taste buds crazy.

HOW DOES THIS SALAD - MAKING APPLY TO OUR GROUP ?

The Salad bowl symbolizes Australia.

The Salad symbolize us, the people of Australia.

The Dressing symbolizes the English language which, like the dressing brings out the goodness from the salad, and makes the mixing and communication possible within the multicultural society of this country.

HOW WAS ANTHROPOSALATA UNLIMITED FORMED ?

Some time ago, I was doing a course as a trainee interviewer for the Southern Peninsula Community Information and Support Centre. I did research about the lifestyle of the elderly in the Peninsula. During my research, I interviewed people on the street, in their houses and through friends. I also visited the Greek Women’s Club in Rye.

It seemed to me that the migrant experience in Australia was different from the Anglo experience. It seemed to me that the Anglo Australians appeared content, more peaceful and happier.

Well, art has always united people, and people need entertainment so they can get in touch with themselves from within. That’s why I thought they needed to have a smile, to have a laugh. That’s when Anthroposalata was born. I wanted to put that smile on peoples faces.

We launched Anthroposalata Unlimited in 2004 at a one day event in Frankston in connection with the Torch Project, the Brotherhood of St. Laurence, and the South Central Region Migrant Resource Centre. For me it was a glimpse of what my vision is all about ! The harmony, closeness, and the bonding we all felt and was demonstrated by all the different nationalities who participated was a priceless reward for everyone involved. It included a variety of Australian nationalities: Indigenous Australians, people from English speaking backgrounds, East Timorese, Greeks, Italians, Spanish, Chileans, Russians, Chinese, Burmese, Polish, Germans and many more.

We had singing, dancing, plays and sketches. We had a display of art from a range of countries, Indigenous dancing and art demonstrations. We had multicultural cuisine. Most participants were amateurs, they were not professionals and we had 100% success. We had a great time, everybody was happy and what I noticed, which really encouraged me to keep going and trying to set up this Anthroposalata group, is the fact that during the rehearsals this multicultural group became one family. There were no barriers. There were hugs and kisses, everyone being welcoming and warm, some of them didn’t speak English but the feeling was there. You could see they felt very comfortable with each other. This glimpse of my vision encouraged me to continue.

I realised that from Mornington down to Portsea there is nothing obviously multicultural, and at least 30 different nationalities reside in this area. There is nothing for them. I am trying to set up something in Rosebud. At the moment, the South Central Region Migrant Resource Centre is helping out by trying to move things along so we can have a venue in Rosebud. The Mornington Peninsula Shire is also showing interest and helping out.



VIOLETTA PARRA GROUPO FOLKLORICO

WHAT DOES ANTHROPOSALATA DO ?

Anthroposalata Unlimited is a group where everyone participates in some way. Besides discussions that break the racial barriers, we sing, dance, act, read poems, tell stories, share experiences, mix and match language games and set up plays which we perform in multicultural festivals and for our own entertainment every so often.

THE AIMS OF ANTHROPOSALATA UNLIMITED

Anthroposalata Unlimited seeks to be a group that is multicultural, educational and entertaining.

It is impossible to connect, bond, improve without the use of the English language. I emphasize the English language because we live in an English speaking country. If we were in Japan, it would be Japanese, in Germany, German etc. In order to feel the much needed sense of belonging, hope and equity we must learn to speak the language, so we can be part of the Anthroposalata in the big salad bowl of Australia.

Poor social relations and lack of community participation are as big a risk to our health as smoking, obesity and lack of physical activity. Connecting with people is one of the best things you can do to protect your health: community bonds, social interaction and relationships promote co-operation and tend to ease the stress of everyday life and reduce feelings of loneliness.

In Anthroposalata we come together to share our experiences, talents, skills, enthusiasm, optimism, and to make a difference in our own and someone else's life. Our group members will benefit from all of our activities and have great fun, and we will share that with all those people who see us perform. It is therapeutic for them and us.

WHO CAN JOIN ? WHEN DO YOU MEET ?

Anyone can join, young or old, if they are interested, they are welcome. There are no limitations. Nobody is forced to participate in any of the activities, such as dancing, singing and acting, if they don't wish to. There are always many other tasks that helpers can assist with, just by participating and having fun.

There's something for everyone. We have regular meetings, workshops and a social night every month. Performance rehearsals and dates are also set when needed.

HOW CAN PEOPLE ASSIST ?

We need lots of helpers, and once involved people might discover their hidden talents and decide to bring them out. Being part of Anthroposalata will make a difference in people's lives.

You don't have to speak English well, you don't even have to sing, dance or act. You can join the fun participating in other things like: helping with the costume making, stage setting, sounds, stage management, make-up or even just making the tea and coffee. Make new friends and have fun!

A PERSONAL PROFILE

My name is Amalia Sintihaki and I would like to tell you a little about myself. I come from the island of Crete. I came to Australia in 1969 with my husband. We had no family or relatives here, but we made our own! Two sons and a daughter! We had our share of good and bad times and the usual problems every family has. We were a very theatrical and musical family. My husband is an actor and a musician.

We had our own theatre company and we were doing one show a year besides our other work. My husband was the only actor in the family but the rest of us worked behind the scenes. Watching and seeing the audience laughing to the point of tears, and stamping their feet, was my reward for my hard work.

After many years, and after the children had grown up and married, I divorced and moved down to the Peninsula to be close to the sea, which is natural for an islander from Greece like me. I became involved as much as I possibly could with the community, so I could give something back, and at the same time help myself go through the separation and divorce.

I worked as a volunteer at the Community Support and Information Centre in Rosebud for a year, then did a course to be an interviewer at the Centre. I volunteered with "Do Care", became a volunteer at the Migrant Resource Centre and the Community Garden project. Meanwhile I was working towards the shaping and establishment of my "baby", the Anthroposalata Unlimited group.

I kept doing various courses such as basic computer, psychology, self-esteem, local history, Spanish, Italian and the Active Community Involvement Course. My passion though is to develop Anthroposalata Unlimited into a great multicultural group which will give people a lot of laughter and joy.

AMALIA IN THE ROLE OF APHRODITE IN A SCENE FROM ANTHROPOSALATA



rice for cambodia

AN INTERVIEW WITH SHAUN AND REBECCA M^CCARTHY

INTERVIEWER: ROSEMARIE DRAPER

"Maybe we're entering into a period that could be called Micro-Charity, where people are mobile enough to go out, see things and to take action themselves."

HOW WAS RICE FOR CAMBODIA FORMED ?

Rebecca was walking the dog with Sharon, a friend who is a travel agent. She mentioned that the Cambodian travel industry was struggling due to SARS and Bird Flu. The industry had therefore organised a very cheap trip to Cambodia and Vietnam for travel agents and their partners or a friend to promote both countries as holiday destinations. Rebecca jumped at the chance to travel with Sharon to Cambodia.

On their last day in Siem Reap, Cambodia, they took a Tuk-Tuk (local taxi) ride out to the 'Killing Fields'. Two boys came up to them, and talked about an orphanage run by local Buddhist Monks. They didn't have time to look into it properly, but it sounded like the Monks were struggling to keep the orphanage going. So they emptied their bags and gave them anything they might find useful such as airline-provided toothpaste, toothbrushes etc.

On their return to Australia, they contacted their Cambodian tour guide asking him to clarify the situation at the orphanage. The tour guide e-mailed them back saying yes: they were desperate for any assistance that could be provided. So they distributed 'boxes of love', shoeboxes, to all their friends, who filled them with practical items, such as underwear and toothpaste.

Rebecca held a coffee morning and raised enough money to buy backpacks for people who were going to Cambodia to transport the shoe boxes (a slow process because not many people were going at the time). One backpack filled with these boxes of love, inadvertently went to the wrong orphanage when it was delivered by a tuk-tuk driver, who was making the delivery on behalf of someone else. The back packer then found out that the second orphanage was even worse off and struggling to provide basic food. At least, at the other orphanage, the Monks went out and begged for food to feed themselves and the orphans. This second orphanage did not even have this food supply and they had no funding support from the government.

They decided that the backpacks were taking too long to reach Cambodia. The group really wanted to go back to Cambodia, see the orphanages for themselves and find out what help they needed. So a group of 14 friends went over on the understanding that they each had to take items for the orphanages as half of their luggage.

Before they went, they organised a trivia night and raised \$500. The second orphanage really needed food, so they committed to supply rice to them on a monthly basis. They visited a local rice mill and got a good deal. The group committed to paying for a teacher for the Monastery Orphanage, as there are musical instruments to help the orphans learn about dance and music. If the children can form a music or dance group, they could perform and make an income for now and create a job for when they are older.

Since then, one of the most important events has been a friend visiting Cambodia twice, allowing the group to get a substantial understanding of what goes on there and also to make sure that everything the groups gives goes in the right direction. This is a big concern of the group. The friend stayed in Cambodia for 4-5 weeks in late 2004 and 3 weeks in early 2005. She paid all costs herself and plans to go back for three months to live with the orphans. Now that the charity has been established, the group is excited about raising funds on a sustainable, continual basis.

WHAT DOES RICE FOR CAMBODIA DO ?

Rice for Cambodia is committed to supplying rice on a monthly basis to the Sangkheum Children's Centre and paying for a music teacher for the What Thmei Orphanage. "We have helped build another orphanage about twenty kilometres outside of Siem Reap."

Our main commitment is to the organisation called Life and Hope Association, which runs services for orphans and vulnerable children in the community. The aim of this organisation is to make sure the children are able to get to school and have enough to eat. Education is so important for the children, so that they can hopefully fend for themselves eventually.

The music tuition is provided so that the children can earn money by forming a dance group, accompanied by musicians, to perform in the many hotels being built in Siem Reap. Due to the proximity of Angkor Watt, Siem Reap is destined to be a tourist hot spot. Orphans in Cambodia are treated as second class citizens; they find it difficult to even marry a non-orphan. They need more help; they need skills to be able to provide for themselves when they leave the orphanage.

THE AIMS OF RICE FOR CAMBODIA

The charity is involved in helping children. When people in Australia are approached by anyone in the charity area, they want to know specifically who the money is going to. The more specific and concrete a charity is about where the money is going, the more people feel able and willing to make a contribution. They like to feel that any money that they give does not go to administrative costs or any other costs. Rice for Cambodia has no administrative costs and everything given goes straight to the services provided.

Cambodia can be horrific and they really struggle. They're such lovely people and so very happy and outgoing. They say "Don't give us a fish, give us a fishing rod". They really want to get hold of it and do it for themselves.

The amazing thing is that very small amounts of money can make a huge difference. One of the orphanages has just had a Ministry of Social Security take back their land, so the children had nowhere to go. We have fortunately been able to provide building materials to build two dormitories, a kitchen and a lounge area on a piece of land owned by the former director of the orphanage. The cost was about 1000 dollars.

In developed countries people have a view point that there is a social security system that provides a network and that it's the government's job, which is what happens in most countries. You won't die of starvation in Australia. It's very hard for people to understand that in many overseas countries, that type of arrangement does not exist. Cambodia is an acute example. One thing about Australia is that, if people can see something specific, they're incredibly generous. People have been asked to use the Community Benefit card (see 'How can people assist?' section following) and then they come back and say "well here's \$100". People have also given bags of rice.

Since Rice in Cambodia started there's been contact with a lot of people who are actually doing similar things, people who either have some special connection with Cambodia, or another 3rd World country. There are people who are running schools, or have organised computer lessons over there. Maybe we're entering into a period that could be called Micro-Charity, where people are mobile enough to go out, see things and take action themselves.

WHO CAN JOIN RICE FOR CAMBODIA ?

Anyone can make contact with us by telephone or email. We have a website which is www.riceforcambodia.org. Since we started, a lot of people have started to phone and we've been struck by how much people are prepared to give of their time, their money and also goods.

HOW CAN PEOPLE ASSIST RICE FOR CAMBODIA ?

There are two main ways that money is raised. There are one-off events such as trivia nights. The 1st one was held at the house, but now they are at a motel on Mornington-Tyabb Road. Two of the

owners were part of the group that went to Cambodia and give free use of the hotel. The staff also work for nothing on these nights. Both of these have raised \$2,000 - \$3,000 each, these nights will continue.

Another event was at the Albert Street Restaurant. Pierre, the owner said to Rebecca when she went to collect a free dinner voucher for a raffle prize "Why don't you take the whole restaurant over?" We did. About 60 people paid \$65 each for a 5 course meal.

Everything was provided by the suppliers of the restaurant. Pierre and his staff worked for nothing. The night raised \$4,400. A couple of events such as this can easily raise up to \$10,000 a year.

The charity is now registered with Ritchie's which has a community benefit service where if shoppers produce their card, Ritchie's will give 1% of the purchases to a charity of their choice: occasionally we stand outside Ritchie's and give out these cards and ask shoppers to use Rice for Cambodia as their designated charity. There are also people who have started to give annual pledges. If more people used their Ritchie's card, it would create a steady income to pay for rice and other food.

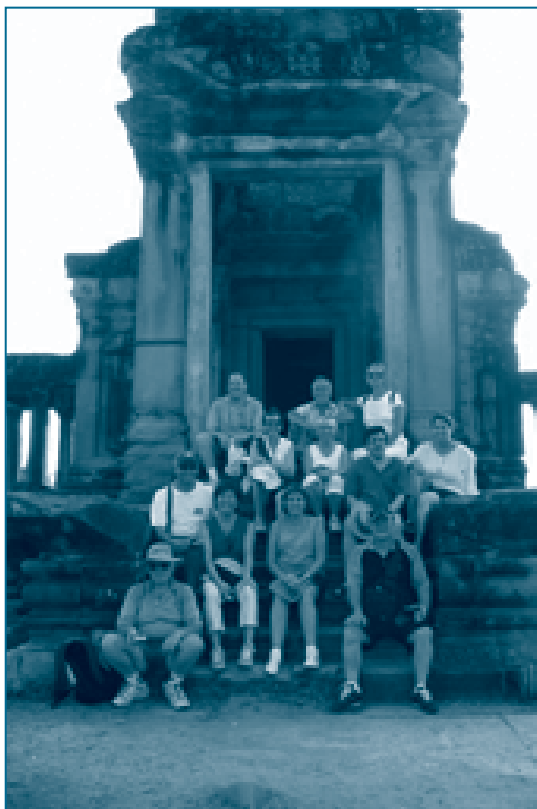
When people ask how they can help, they really should come up with their own ideas. Ruth of Chetwyn Retreat in South Frankston, a beauty therapy and massage parlour, said she could raise money with her skills. She organised a day of facials to raise money. We can always have a conversation if people bring their ideas along. 'How can we organise this' is a common question.

A PERSONAL PROFILE

Shaun does most of the administrative work and making connections, but Rebecca does the promoting and making sure people attend events. They are helped by a group of friends. Mark and Sue Switala are the main people behind the trivia nights, giving both their motel and their time to the night's success. Shaun and Rebecca have just returned from a self-funded visit to Siem Reap to make sure that all the help that was being sent was getting through OK. Things in Siem Reap are going very smoothly but there is still a desperate need for more assistance

If you want to help just call either Shaun or Rebecca on 03 9708 8755 or visit the web site.

RICE FOR CAMBODIA



south central region migrant resource centre mornington

AN INTERVIEW WITH MAVRA VAKALIS

INTERVIEWER: AMALIA SINTIHAKI

“There is still a lot of racism and discrimination today. It’s not always detected, particularly on the Mornington Peninsula, where it’s assumed that everyone is Anglo Celtic.” Mavra Vakalis

HOW WAS THE SOUTH CENTRAL REGION MIGRANT RESOURCE CENTRE FORMED ?

The South Central Region Migrant Resource Centre (SCR MRC) was formed 1981. The head office is in Oakleigh and there are offices in Prahran and East Bentleigh. There are also a number of smaller posts including this small outreach office in Mornington. The SCR MRC’s management model, also incorporates the New Hope Foundation, which provides support and material aid to newly arrived migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

WHAT DOES THE SOUTH CENTRAL REGION MIGRANT RESOURCE CENTRE DO IN MORNINGTON?

We only have two positions, both part time. One position is for an Aged Services Development Officer, an access and equity position working with service providers, encouraging them to be inclusive of all people, no matter which languages they speak or don’t speak. I’m a part-time Volunteer Co-Ordinator.

Both positions are funded by the Department of Human Services under the State Government Funded Program of HACC (Home and Community Care), for aged people from non-English speaking backgrounds. I focus on people who are socially isolated, frail, or who have disabilities. People’s needs vary from interpreting at appointments, written translations or transportation to medical or other appointments, like social outings and attending church. It is crucial to employ bilingual people in organisations, to break the barriers caused by a lack of understanding between cultures. We are all the same.

We let organisations know about our programs so that they can refer non-English speaking people to specific local culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) senior citizen social clubs. These are also funded under HACC. There are two planned activity groups at Mary Court in Mornington, a multicultural day care program and a Greek day care program (see further details in the information section). We have two buses and volunteer drivers who provide transport. The Multicultural Day Care Program usually offers excursions by bus, transporting people from home. They might go to Melbourne, to the zoo or to shopping centres. The group includes people who are frail or require mobility assistance. The Greek Day Care Program offers most of the activities at Mary Court. There is a charge, but the cost is subsidised by the HACC funding and includes morning and afternoon tea, lunch and any indoor or outdoor activities. We have trained bilingual coordinators who look after this program.

We also consult with the CALD seniors living in Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula. A number of groups said “We need to learn to speak English”. English classes are now offered on the Mornington Peninsula and in Frankston. They are going really well.

WHAT ARE THE AIMS OF THE SOUTH CENTRAL REGION MIGRANT RESOURCE CENTRE ?

The main aim of the SCR MRC is to promote access and equity for people of non-English speaking background. Immigrating or fleeing to a culture that may be very different to your own origin is a life changing experience. There is still a lot of racism and discrimination today. It’s not always detected, particularly on the Mornington Peninsula where it’s assumed that everyone is Anglo Celtic.

We work to raise awareness about the reasons why people can't speak English, why they have specific needs and what these are. Some people have the view that "You've been here thirty years, learn to speak the language", but there are a number of reasons why people who have been here many years may not speak English. They may have been too busy working and raising children to have time to learn. They may not know what language services are available and, for longer term residents, they may not be eligible for subsidised English language courses. For older people of CALD background, English classes did not exist when they migrated to Australia.

Service providers need to be educated and informed about cultural diversity. Once people understand cultural diversity there will be better communication, better access, less discrimination, more social justice and more equity. There will be more initiatives like translated public information, such as rates notices, car registration and costs for bus fares. I realise its not easy, and it would cost more, but it would certainly ease the life of many migrants. It's the right thing to do. It's putting people first.

One of the main reasons people from non-English speaking backgrounds don't ask for help is because they can't speak English or they don't know what help is available or how to go about accessing it. They might have lived in Melbourne, bought holiday homes on the Peninsula long ago, not thinking that one day they would grow old, and they would have back problems from their hard work. The Peninsula was a place they could move to, away from Melbourne, to enjoy the sea. It may resemble their country of birth.

They used to bring their children. Now they are older, their children remain in Melbourne where there are a lot more opportunities for work and better services such as more public transport. The parents have given their Melbourne homes to their children and have come to the Peninsula to reside. Now they find themselves isolated. They can't access services and not many people understand what their needs are.

Although there are many people who go to senior citizens clubs, there are also many who don't. This may be because they are unwell or have grown old and frail, and they don't want their friends/relatives to see them like that. It's not just a matter of how their friends/relatives see them; it's how they see themselves. Their coping mechanism may be to curl up and hope that all their problems just go away.

HOW CAN PEOPLE HELP THE SOUTH CENTRAL REGION MIGRANT RESOURCE CENTRE ?

We have a range of activities and we need lots of volunteers, especially to help those who are socially isolated and need to get to a variety of appointments with people and organisations such as doctors, church or Centrelink, and to come to the planned activity groups. Volunteers are also needed for home respite and friendly visits. People who are interested in being involved can give us a phone call at the office (see contact list at the end of this book).

A PERSONAL PROFILE

About three years ago Mavra did a module called Australian Society (Sociology) at Chisholm Institute in Frankston; she decided to do Greek Culture because that was her background. "I followed my heart and did Greek Culture research, which helped me understand my parents better. It was very therapeutic for me, because being born in Australia and being born between two cultures in the 60's was very difficult"

Mavra's parents migrated to Australia, which had been promoted as a wonderful land of opportunities. Their own country was poverty stricken post World War 2, and for many reasons, people were fleeing their country.

"My parents came in 1954/1956 and they were given factory work." The people who migrated didn't have relevant work skills or English. "They worked really hard to try and build some sort

of life, such as owning their own homes, so that when the children were born they were able to have a better life and not struggle as they did. A lot of people thought they would work for a while and then go back to their own country in a better situation, but instead they stayed, got married and had children. People often didn't learn English because on a production line in a factory they were often told to shut up and keep working. They were not allowed to speak amongst each other and if they did they were in trouble."

There was a division of roles in the household, the man did his work, the woman did hers. "I often find out by talking to women who come to the MRC, that women did their factory work, worked long hours and finished at night. They couldn't speak English so they'd often get on a tram tired, miss the landmark for their stop, pass it or even take the wrong tram. They couldn't communicate with anyone to tell them where they lived, ask for help in getting there or even ask what tram they were on. I hear this often and they have tears in their eyes just like it happened yesterday. The husbands would then worry and begin looking for them, sometimes they would not return until midnight, it was devastating for them."

Mavra's own mother had a full time job and worked overtime, she would then do the "women's work", cooking, the dishes and the washing – and there were no washing machines. "She would then help me to read my Greek homework. I couldn't understand why she never learnt English". When Mavra did her research it showed that at first women were not allowed to drive. Either the men were too tired to take them to English school or, with all their chores, they couldn't find the time for English classes.

"My research shows me that Olympic Dunlop Tyres offered English classes. It was one of the few factories that offered such a program, but it was offered during lunchtime, which wasn't long enough and they was no way of getting there without being late for work. This caused social isolation. The only way that people could communicate was to go to communities or shops where they spoke the same language, or to ask for simple things, or simply point to something, so people stuck with their own nationalities to be able to function."

Imagine if you were forced to go to another country, or had to go there for a better life. The first thing that you will suffer from is culture shock e.g. I know of a Cambodian woman. She's 25, she's in love with a Greek man however she suffers because of the language barrier, she is going to English classes so she has the opportunity to learn. She is not working, and she is in culture shock. She can't understand what people are talking about; everyone looks different to her. Her partner takes her to Springvale one day a week so that she can see people from her own community and can do simple things like buying produce she knows to cook her meals. Her partner can't understand why she won't eat Greek food; I asked if he wanted to change this woman, if he wanted to take everything from her. I told him he should consider starting to eat her food. Mavra feels that once she learns English and listens to media she will understand more and that might be more challenging for him.

AMALIA SINTIHAKI, ROSEMARIE DRAPER AND MAVRA VAKALIS



mornington peninsula burma action group

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROSEMARIE DRAPER

INTERVIEWER: GAIL PRICE

“Almost all my life I’ve been interested in the restoration of democracy in Burma, and have been very much inspired by Aung San Suu Kyi.” Rosemarie Draper

HOW WAS THE MORNINGTON PENINSULA BURMA ACTION GROUP FORMED ?

The Mornington Peninsula Burma Action Group was launched in 1989. It’s a fairly unstructured group of Burmese born Australian citizens and other local residents. It came about after Rosemarie attended a forum and heard from Gary Hyland who talked about Moreland City Council’s (in metropolitan Victoria) commitment to a Selective Purchasing Policy. A commitment not to use any of their public funds for the purchase of goods and services from companies that trade with or invest in Burma. Trade and investment props up the current military regime. “I saw that as something we could achieve on the Mornington Peninsula.”

Myanmar is the official name for the country previously known as Burma. The name was imposed by the current military dictatorship. The military dictatorship has a history of human rights abuses and repression, stamping out any threat to their power base. The name of Burma is still preferred by people working towards democracy.

WHAT DOES THE MORNINGTON PENINSULA BURMA ACTION GROUP DO ?

The Mornington group conducted a petition, gaining three hundred signatures, requesting that the Mornington Peninsula Shire also adopt a Selective Purchasing Policy to help with the international campaign to free Burma. So far the group has not received a formal response from Council who, instead, responded to Greg Hunt, who had written a support letter as one of the Shire’s Federal members, to say that the Shire had decided not to adopt this as policy. The group is persisting in lobbying the Mornington Peninsula Shire (Council) with the Selective Purchasing Campaign. The Group also lobbies at a state and national level of government in Australia.

Rosemarie sees a lot of information in the Singapore newspapers, which we don’t tend to get in Australia “because Burma isn’t high on the agenda. Part of our strategy is that we disperse the information we come across so that people are informed about the situation in Burma.”

The Group also links with a Victorian NLD* group in Springvale, working to restore democracy in Burma.

WHAT ARE THE AIMS OF THE MORNINGTON PENINSULA BURMA ACTION GROUP ?

Rosemarie has been interested in the return of democracy in Burma, being inspired by Aung San Suu Kyi, one of the leaders of the pro democracy movement and probably the best known internationally. In 1988 Aung San Suu Kyi returned to Burma to nurse her dying mother and then became involved with the pro democracy movement, pressuring the military government into agreeing to hold elections. The military then placed her under house arrest just before the election, along with other potential candidates from the National League for Democracy, making it impossible for them to stand as candidates. The NLD (National League for Democracy) stood last minute candidates in the election and still won 82% of the vote.

The NLD*, therefore, is the legitimate Burmese government. The military, however, ignored the election result and refuses to relinquish government, repressing any opposition.

Thousands of people have been murdered or imprisoned and others have fled across the Burmese border to countries such as Thailand, to refugee camps. Some Burmese people came from these refugee camps to live in Australia. Aung San Suu Kyi continues to be under house arrest and is still working towards democratic elections. Freeing Aung San Suu Kyi would take an international campaign, similar to the campaign that freed Nelson Mandela.

WHO CAN JOIN THE MORNINGTON PENINSULA BURMA ACTION GROUP AND WHEN DO YOU MEET ?

The Group is most often in contact via email, as members are busy and have moved around. Members now work as far away as Singapore, gaining a greater international insight into progress in Burma.

HOW CAN PEOPLE ASSIST THE MORNINGTON PENINSULA BURMA ACTION GROUP ?

Rosemarie is hoping that the people reading this interview will write to the Shire asking the Shire to adopt the Selective Purchasing Policy. "But it's not just the Council – at the same time we continue to lobby at the state and, particularly the federal government level. I think Alexander Downer is sick of the sound of my name!"

It's also possible for people to contribute to the Burma Hope Foundation, which supports Burmese people fleeing to Australia or to the refugee camps on the Burma/Thailand border. (See contact details at the end of this book.)

A PERSONAL PROFILE:

"Almost all my life I've been interested in looking at restoring democracy in Burma, and have been very much inspired by Aung San Suu Kyi."

Rosemarie was born in Burma and left with her family when she was 4 years old, following the military coup that occurred in 1962. Her family migrated to London, which was made easier by the family's part English heritage. Otherwise they may have had to apply for immigration under a refugee category. Rosemarie came to Australia when she was 16. For more information, see the earlier article 'Global and local: a resident's perspective'.

For more information call 0410 417 131.

AUNG SAN SUU KYI



rosebud primary school

cultural diversity activities

INTERVIEW WITH ROSEMARIE DRAPER

INTERVIEWER: GAIL PRICE

“Everyone has a cultural background and everyone’s heritage should be celebrated.” Rosemarie Draper

BACKGROUND

When my children almost reached school age, I looked at a few schools around my home on the Mornington Peninsula for them to attend. At each of the schools I asked how they celebrated cultural diversity and whether their curriculum covered a range of faiths. The response was positive, but the staff couldn’t articulate anything specific, except that the only religious education offered locally was Christian-based. In some schools there was a sense of bewilderment of why the questions were even being asked.

I began to realise that the Mornington Peninsula is different to some other areas of Victoria. The multicultural make up of the population isn’t as obvious. As a parent from a non English-speaking country, I felt that this should be recognized.

I was galvanized into action even earlier by a statement from my daughter when she was two (years old) that she hated the colour brown, and she wanted confirmation that she had “white skin like Dad, not brown skin like you, Mum”. That made me realise that, despite everything that I had said and done to promote self esteem and pride in her heritage, she was getting some other messages from the general community and multi media.

THE AIMS OF THE CULTURAL DIVERSITY ACTIVITIES

So I started giving talks to pre-school students and staff about cultural diversity. When my children started at Rosebud Primary School I joined the School Council and raised the issue at the Policy and Curriculum Sub-Committee level, suggesting that, as a strategy to build self esteem and discourage bullying – my children did at times experience racist bullying – that we really should do something to celebrate the diversity of all the children at the school, whatever their heritage. I wanted an inclusive approach that recognised ancestry from both English speaking and non English-speaking backgrounds.

WHAT CULTURAL DIVERSITY ACTIVITIES HAVE TAKEN PLACE ?

I looked at a number of activities to promote appreciation of people’s own culture. We began with a mini census to identify all our cultural backgrounds. Students at the school took home questionnaires about the cultural origins of their families, including their grand parents and other family members to build a broader information base. The results of the survey challenged the assumption that the school is mono cultural, revealing over time that the population of the school had some ancestry from at least 31 countries, from every continent of the world. The results showed that we had a global heritage that wasn’t being recognized.

In 2003 we decided to organise a week of cultural diversity activities at the school, coinciding with the State Government’s Inaugural Cultural Diversity Week, which incorporated the Federal Government’s Harmony Day on 21 March.

These dates were chosen by Australia’s State and Federal Governments because the United Nations has named 21 March the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, commemorating the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre. It’s the anniversary of police opening fire and killing sixty-nine people at a peaceful demonstration against the apartheid “pass laws”, in Sharpeville, South Africa. Proclaiming the Day in 1966, the General Assembly called on the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination. The Australian Government calls it Harmony Day.

ARTIST BEN MCKEOWN WORKING WITH STUDENTS ON INDIGENOUS ART



The Rosebud Primary School Multicultural Program provides activities for children of the school to learn about a range of cultures, from indigenous communities to immigrant communities. The culmination of the week has been a twilight festival, as part of a range of activities to raise awareness of the benefits of cultural diversity to the school and to the broader community.

One of the activities in 2003 was a visit by students from the Islamic Minaret College. This visit coincided with the United States Government declaring war against Iraq. It was sad but, the other side of this situation was the opportunity for students and staff to meet people wearing forms of traditional Islamic clothing, such as the hijab, and gain insight into the fact that we all share similarities.

The week is multicultural and inclusive – it's about everyone's cultural background, not only about people from non English-speaking backgrounds. People in the school community didn't initially understand why I thought this was important for everyone. There were statements like "It's not as if we're a school in Footscray or Springvale".

My point is that it's exactly the reason why we should ensure that our children have exposure to range of cultures: because it won't occur automatically as it would in areas closer to Melbourne.

So, with the first program, not all the staff or parents on the committees understood why the School should carry out cultural diversity activities. Some parents, however, really supported the activities, giving examples of racism they had experienced or witnessed on the Mornington Peninsula, including within the school. Some forms of racism have been very obvious and others more subtle. An example I experienced is my son coming home from school one day, very upset because other students had told him that he wasn't allowed to play with them because he was Chinese. My son isn't Chinese, by the way; I'm Burmese and my partner is a white Australian with Scottish and English ancestry. But, as is the case with most racist or xenophobic attitudes, it's more to do with ignorance than anything else.

In 2003 we booked an Indigenous performing artist, as well as having a visit from the Islamic Minaret College. We had activities relating to St. Patrick's Day, which occurs on the same date as the beginning of the state government's cultural diversity week. Children learned about the first English settlement in Victoria at Sorrento, 200 years previously and the school produced a successful multicultural community festival

We continued in 2004, employing two Indigenous Australian artists to work with students, including tutoring students in Aboriginal dance. We raised issues facing Indigenous communities and, therefore all of us. We also brought in a visual artist who showed the students how to do dot painting.

We worked in partnership with the Friends of Los Palos (see article on the Friends), an Australian East Timor support group, to build a model East Timorese hut on the school grounds under the guidance of Fevo de Freitas and Bernado Duarte, two East Timorese people living in Australia. Fevo had just returned from New York where he had received a United Nations human rights award for his contribution to the East Timorese and broader community in Australia. Part of Fevo's background is building and carpentry.

There were also presentations on East Timor by Rosalie Sword, the mother of Kirsty Sword Gusmao, the First Lady of East Timor, who lives in Rosebud. David Price, a very active member of the Friends of Los Palos* also gave a presentation on the lives of children in East Timor and explained to the students what they could contribute to the students in Los Palos.

The festival is organised by a combined group of community organisations around the Shire. We draw on the information from the mini census and try to structure activities and book artists who reflect the cultural backgrounds of our students.

Funding has come from a variety of sources such as the Mornington Peninsula Shire, the Victorian Multicultural Commission and the School. Many community organisations also contribute their time and expertise.

In 2005 we had yet another successful week of activities and festival, with assistance from the South Central Region Migrant Resource Centre. Volunteers taught the students dance and songs from Greece, Italy and Germany, which were performed at the multicultural festival.

HOW PEOPLE CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE ROSEBUD PRIMARY SCHOOL CULTURAL DIVERSITY ACTIVITIES

As we hope to form partnerships with other local schools in celebrating similarities and diversity in 2006, we are uncertain of the future format of the festivities. There will be information in the local media and on site at the school. People are invited to participate in whichever way they would like, whether it's performing, having a food or information stall or activity. If anyone wants to know more, please call Rosebud Primary School on (03) 5986 8274.

FEVO DE FREITAS DEMONSTRATING TRADITIONAL EAST TIMORESE BUILDING SKILLS



friends of los palos

east timor community committee (FOLP)

INTERVIEW WITH DAVID PRICE, HELEN HENDREY, FRANCES RULE & LINDA WIMETAL
INTERVIEWER: GAIL PRICE

"It's important to provide what people need. It may differ from what people in Australia want to offer."
David Price

EAST TIMOR INDEPENDENCE

East Timor was colonised by Portugal for four hundred and fifty years. East Timor declared itself independent from Portugal on 28 November 1975 and was invaded and occupied by Indonesian forces nine days later. Twenty-four years of resistance and fighting followed and an Independence ballot was held in East Timor in August 1999.

The ballot was overseen by the United Nations and received overwhelming support for East Timor to become a country independent of Indonesia.

When the results of the ballot were announced, the Indonesian forces and militia in East Timor created widespread devastation, destroying 80% of the infrastructure - homes, schools, medical centres, government offices - and killing many hundreds of East Timorese citizens. The Australian Army, under the banner of the United Nations Peacekeepers, was sent in to restore peace and order. The Australians were joined by many other nations and worked to create an environment in which the East Timorese could start to rebuild their communities.

THE AIMS OF FOLP

The East Timorese leadership approached local governments in Victoria to consider 'Friendship Relationships' with East Timorese communities. The description of 'Friendship Relationships' is that 'Friends will walk with us as we heal our pain.'

HOW WAS FOLP FORMED ?

In May 2000, the Mornington Peninsula Shire approved a Friendship Relationship between the Shire and the sub-district of Los Palos, in East Timor. This was followed by a public fund raising appeal, launched by Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao.

There are now more than twenty Australian friendship groups relating to different areas of East Timor, most of them associated with Local Government.

In October of the year 2000, a Mornington Peninsula Shire delegation of two councillors and two officers went to East Timor to meet with the Local District Administrator and community people generally while becoming familiar with the district. The delegation was in East Timor for two weeks and concentrated on Los Palos in the east.

In November 2000, the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council endorsed the priorities identified by the local community in Los Palos and supported the establishment of a community committee in the Mornington Peninsula Shire to further the on-going relationship with the community of Los Palos. This was called the Mornington Peninsula Friends of Los Palos, East Timor Community Committee (FOLP).

WHAT DOES FOLP DO ?

FOLP follows up funding requests from people in Los Palos for development projects. In the initial stages the group provided such items as seven motorbikes, intended for various community groups as well as material aid such as clothing, tools, school books, school furniture and first aid supplies. As the situation changes in East Timor, so does the kind of support needed.

FOLP has also contributed to horticultural and agricultural projects in Los Palos. The owners of Heronswood, a local Mornington Peninsula historical house and garden and home of "Diggers Seeds", donated vegetable and flower seeds as well as money to projects in Los Palos and a since retired member of the FOLP Committee, also contributed significantly to on-the-ground organisation and development of agricultural projects in Los Palos, working with and for the local community there.

An early request was received for wedding dresses and other items so that a women's group could set up a Bridal Hire and Beauty Salon for women who were getting married. Approximately twenty-five dresses as well as shoes, jewellery and make-up were then sent to Los Palos.

The current Chairman of the Committee is David Price, who is also a doctor and surgeon. David has spent time assisting in East Timor - most recently in Baucau Hospital which is some distance from our friendship district. Los Palos itself is in critical need of more medical resources such as equipment, doctors and paramedics.

During a visit in 2004 and on behalf of FOLP, David took \$5,500 worth of medicine to Los Palos, much of which was worming tablets for children. This followed the internationally reported tragic and preventable death of a child from worm infestation. There are many such preventable deaths in East Timor.

Another FOLP project was assistance with the refurbishment of the then only guest-house in Los Palos. The Committee assisted with funds for a well and a tank and tank-stand to supply water. This project is an example of the Friends supporting economic independence. Even if the projects are not always as successful as hoped, the experience of co-operative interaction between two different communities requires constant learning and adaptability of all parties, providing an interesting, vital challenge for everyone involved.

The group supports a local soap-making project, in 2004 purchasing a mechanical press to extract the oil from the local coconuts. The Friends also provides assistance with marketing and sales in Australia. FOLP has assisted the enterprises of a working women's co-operative in Los Palos as well. Fundraising events are held on the Mornington Peninsula and some East Timorese produce (coffee, woven products, bookmarks, soaps) is sold at local festivals.

The group has worked with Rosebud Primary School to assist in a project employing two East Timorese Australians in the building of a model of a traditional East Timorese sacred house, all part of an on-going education process.

A number of schools in East Timor are supported by the Friendship Schools Project. This project matches schools in Australia with schools in East Timor and helps the children to learn about each others' countries and culture.

Crib Point Primary, Mornington Primary, St Macartan's Primary and Woodleigh College are all linked with schools in Los Palos. More schools in both the Mornington Peninsula and throughout Victoria are registered for the project and will be joined in friendship with an East Timor school when there are sufficient resources in East Timor.

Other schools, groups and individuals have also donated money and goods that the Friends of Los Palos has organised for shipment to East Timor.

There are still many basic needs which are not being fulfilled in Los Palos. People require generators as there is almost no electricity. There's no postal service. Letters travel from Indonesia to Dili but the only way to get mail to Los Palos is for someone to take it with them when travelling there. There is very limited email service and almost no computers in the district. There is some limited SMS coverage from mobile telephones. The United Nations removed its communications equipment when it withdrew after full independence was reached on May 20, 2002. There is a great need for roads, housing and public buildings such as schools. Up to 80% of the infrastructure was destroyed during the resistance.

There are a number of East Timorese communities in Australia – for example in Victoria, Richmond, Collingwood and Dandenong as well as other metropolitan and inner city areas have large groups of East Timorese families. For some years there was great concern about the future of East Timorese permanent visa applicants, as it looked as though these people would be forced to return to East Timor. There were also attempts to classify East Timorese people as Portuguese citizens, as Portugal once occupied East Timor. There was great relief for many Australians when nearly all of the 12,000 visa applicants were given resident visas in 2004.

FOLP continues to develop and expand the form of assistance offered. It's important for the communities to identify what they need and for Australia to listen, rather than to provide what Australians believe the communities should have.

The Friends of Los Palos continues to learn about the most effective way to contribute to local communities. Listening to expressed community need and aspirations and researching the best ways in which to provide assistance which reflects FOLP's own guidelines, is an ongoing challenge. Faith in the people of Los Palos and an absolute belief in the right of the community to decide its own future are essential to the successful distribution of grants and other resources.

PARTICIPATING IN THE FOLP COMMITTEE

FOLP is now a Committee of Council, with twelve members, over fifty active members and more than three hundred people on the mailing list. FOLP has been consistently active, changing in membership, but not in purpose. Rules and guidelines are updated as needed. The Committee meets monthly.

New members are very welcome. Please note the contact details in the directory at the end of this book.

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amnesty international

mornington peninsula

INTERVIEW WITH JODIE LINZ

INTERVIEWER: SUSAN BLACKBURN-MITCHELL

HOW WAS AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL MORNINGTON PENINSULA FORMED ?

Several years ago Amnesty International (AI) sent out information to all its members on the Mornington Peninsula telling them of a meeting to gauge interest in forming a local group. AI has many local groups throughout the world where people meet to discuss human rights, to organise fund raising and awareness raising activities and to take action, such as write letters to people in power around the world.

WHAT DOES AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL MORNINGTON PENINSULA DO ?

We raise a small amount of money for AI. We often focus on raising awareness in the community. We get a lot of letters written. It's hard to gauge how much this achieves, but we do know that there have been many people around the world who have been released, not tortured or threatened anymore etc., etc., because letters arrived from all over the world.

We also organise at least one main event each year to raise money and awareness. For example we will soon have a quiz night in Balnarring and later a special night with a guest speaker.

THE AIMS OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL MORNINGTON PENINSULA

We quite simply want to raise awareness of what Amnesty International is and does, what human rights are and what people can do to personally get involved. Also to highlight what being in a group that takes action can achieve in a community.

WHO CAN JOIN AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL MORNINGTON PENINSULA ? WHEN DO YOU MEET ?

We welcome anyone who wants to join us and work with us for change. This year we only have three meetings as we have so many busy people, several of whom are often travelling. As a result, attendance at some meetings was low and at times of little value. Previously we met every month. Our new structure has worked well and we are still organising events.

There is no cost, but we do ask for \$2 to cover the small cost of hiring the room. We usually meet at the Mornington Community Centre, Wilsons Road, but also meet at the Mornington Library Community Meeting Room, Corner Queen and Vancouver Streets, Mornington. People on our contact list are informed by a regular emailed newsletter.

HOW CAN PEOPLE ASSIST AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL MORNINGTON PENINSULA ?

At times we need help. For example, running a stall on Candle Day. We also collect food for the Refugee Centre in Dandenong (i.e., cooking oil, sugar, non-perishables). Sometimes people collect these things at other groups, such as Church, and drop them off to a meeting of ours and we take the goods to Dandenong. We also collect phone cards and stamps sometimes so people in detention can contact home. We don't get money donations to our group, but if we did, we would use the money to buy aerogrammes and stamps for the letters we write.

A PERSONAL PROFILE

I had meant to join for a few years, then East Timor happened in the late 1990's and I had to join up. Seeing the news footage was terrible: seeing what was happening to all of those innocent people. I figured that there's no point complaining about such injustices and not

doing anything about it. Lots of terrible things happen in the world, whether it be related to human rights, animal rights or the environment. There's always something that people living in countries like Australia can do, whether it be joining an organisation, writing letters, educating others about the issue, or something else.

I am now the Convenor of the Mornington Peninsula Amnesty International Group. I've been running the meetings this year and sending an email newsletter. Sometimes I'm involved in stalls such as Amnesty International Candle Day, our main fundraiser.

How do I remain hopeful? I don't know that I really do, I don't have much faith in human kind sometimes. When it comes to certain things, like our treatment of the environment, we're not too clever. But, I figure that if people start doing things, that will spread the message, and the more people who act upon things that should be changed, the more likely things will change.



actors for refugees (AFR)

AN INTERVIEW WITH LIZ RALPH

INTERVIEWER: SUSAN BLACKBURN-MITCHELL

HOW WAS ACTORS FOR REFUGEES FORMED ?

Actors for Refugees (AFR) was formed in Melbourne, Australia, in September 2001. Founding members Alice Garner and Kate Atkinson wanted to use the collective might of Australian actors to influence community attitudes toward refugees and asylum seekers and to encourage a humanitarian response to their plight.

WHAT DOES ACTORS FOR REFUGEES DO ?

As actors, we can give faces and voices to the unseen and unheard who need our compassion. We are given the privilege of portraying people of all kinds, with different histories, politics, cultures; we represent Australia to Australians. This requires an openness and a willingness to try to understand why people do what they do. We can tell stories that will reignite compassion and understanding in others.

As communicators, we understand the potency of language and the powerful and damaging role it has played in shaping existing popular opinion. We can redress discriminatory representations of refugees with more accurate information, but also with personal stories that appeal to the best in Australians, rather than inflame easily stirred fears. While we combat the demonising of asylum seekers in detention we can also hope that, on their release, misunderstanding and suspicion will not follow them into the community.

As public figures, we have a potentially larger and more diverse audience than other lobby groups. While we can offer our faces and names to assist the campaigns of others it is equally important that, in a climate where public suspicion surrounds “personalities” using the media to support causes, we also set examples of practical ways we can all work together to deserve our reputation as a generous and inclusive nation.

At the moment we are working on developing an active network of supporters within our industry which will be prepared to appear, speak, or lend their names to the campaigns of other community-based groups and NGOs.

We also aim to assist the development and performance of productions of other groups. We do this often and we are booked by community groups, schools, universities, conferences and workshops, both in Victoria, and all around Australia.

We have a significant pool of personal stories to assist in the development of our own production and/or for the use of actors engaged to speak. These will come from two sources: Refugees, including people with a refugee background who are now resident in Australia, asylum seekers in detention (mindful of the status of their application), and those who have been recently released. We can explore both their Australian “experience” and the events in their homeland that brought them here and, of course, reinforce positive representations of refugees active in our community by celebrating their startling contributions to it. We also work with Australian citizens who have worked with refugees, either in detention or in community services after their release.

These we do in conjunction with encouraging supporters to engage in grassroots activities that directly assist asylum seekers both in detention and living in the community.

THE AIMS OF ACTORS FOR REFUGEES

The principal aim of AFR is: ‘To raise awareness of, and above all humanise the plight of refugees and asylum seekers in Australia, both in and out of detention, as well as those redirected to Pacific Island detention centres’.

To achieve this we support the work of other refugee advocacy groups by lending public profile to an event, in order to increase attendance, aid fundraising efforts, and extend the reach of a campaign to mainstream media.

We also inform industry members about community activities and encourage their participation at a grassroots level. We encourage film, television and theatre practitioners to examine with honesty the situation and representation of refugees in our country, by telling their stories and those of Australians who work with them, in performance, in any medium.

It is our intention that these actions reflect our special position as an artistic, personal and humanising force. In both these ways, our actions will primarily target community attitudes, to complement the work of political lobbyists trying to effect change and that of refugee organisations providing information, funds and services.

There have been a number of grassroots refugee support and advocacy groups to emerge and we share many of their concerns and hopes. While these groups are lobbying in political and legal arenas for the rights of refugees in our country, it is important that we define what we can offer specifically as actors, both in support of these other groups, and as a unique force in the broader campaign.

WHO CAN JOIN ACTORS FOR REFUGEES ? WHEN DO YOU MEET ?

We welcome all actors, musicians and performers to get involved; they can come along and watch a show, get involved in producing and organizing the shows, performing, letting AFR know of potential performance possibilities, help at events to raise public awareness such as conferences, seminars, perhaps schools who may wish to include a performance by AFR in their social justice programs, etc., share their ideas and creativity!

Money raised by AFR performances is forwarded either to a charity, group or cause either nominated by the organisers (whoever requested and booked a show), or AFR is always happy to facilitate or offer suggestions of where money is required, according to specific needs at the time.

Many actors have helped since AFR's inception, whether by performing, putting their names to campaigns, appearing at events, donating money to refugees, or helping us respond to requests from individuals and organisations for our input. While we have a small, core formal membership for administrative purposes, most of the actors named below are supporters of AFR, with no official membership status.

Actors who have helped AFR so far include: Alice Garner, Annie Phelan, Bruce Myles, Caroline Craig, Claudia Karvan, Corinne Grant, Diana Greentree, Genevieve Picot, Jeremy Lindsay-Taylor, Joel Edgerton, Kate Atkinson, John Wood, Noah Taylor, Rupert Reid, Sacha Horler, William McInnes and Tom Long as well as many others from productions including Secret Life of Us, Marshall Law, MDA, Rove Live, Blue Heelers, Always Greener, Something in the Air, Sea Change, The Glass House, Neighbours, The Hard Word, Young Lions, The Dish, Fat Cow Motel, My Brother Jack, Halifax f.p., Kan Yama Kan, Love is a Four Letter Word, Chopper, Life Support, Twenty Four-Seven, Short Cuts, Grass Roots.

A PERSONAL PROFILE

I produce shows for AFR – either ‘Something To Declare’ for adults and upper-high school audiences, or ‘Club Refuge’ for younger audiences and lower high schools. Once someone requests a performance, I get a cast of actors and musicians together, organise a rehearsal, and then liaise with the organiser to work out where, when and to whom the show will be performed!

I produce a show every couple of months – some months are busier than others, depending on the availability of AFR members.

I am involved in AFR to have a part in making a difference to an issue I feel very strongly about. I am not a politician, but I have energy to put into changing unfair policies in a creative and fun way!

I'm motivated by a sense of justice, and the fact that I am able to do something to fight for more of it, that I am not powerless.

Doing shows at high schools keeps me motivated – kids and teenagers are amazingly receptive and interested in knowing what is going on, and the way they engage in discussion after a performance motivates me every time! Whenever we do a show, watching an audience's reaction and seeing people inspired to learn more, to get involved, have a chat, share their opinion, it all keeps me hopeful.

I really believe that human compassion is not far below the surface in most people, and that sometimes just having the facts speak for themselves in a show like "Something To Declare" clarifies feelings for almost everyone – behind all the manipulative language and untruths that we are offered, most people want to give and care for others who are less fortunate. Being in a position to be reminded of this, and doing something to remind others keeps me motivated.

MEMBERS OF ACTORS FOR REFUGEES



contact details for featured groups

Name of Group	Contact	Enquiries
Actors for Refugees [AFR]	Annie PO Box 3177 Ripponlea 3185	tel: 5429 5539 actorsforrefugees@yahoo.com.au www.actorsforrefugees.org.au
Afghani Women's Group	Duty Worker WHISE: Women's Health in the South East	tel: 9783 3211 WHISE Monthly Meetings No Cost
Amnesty International Mornington Peninsula	Jodie Linz 130 Wilsons Road Mornington 3931	tel: 5971 6000 Meetings – three meetings per year are held on a Thursday at 7.30 pm
Anthroposalata Unlimited	Amalia Sintihaki	tel: 0438 844 179
Doing Justice Sunday's at Six	Colin Valentine	tel: 5971 9444 Meetings – currently in abeyance No cost
Frankston Afghan Community	Simon Lufti	tel: 9770 9293
Friends of Los Palos, East Timor Community Committee	Jo Diplock	tel: 5974 8337 Meetings – second Thursday of the month
Getting Fresh Peninsula	Jodie Kewley	tel: 5989 2896 Deliver fresh fruit & vegetables weekly to Dandenong No cost – other than donations of fruit & vegetables, time & petrol costs
Mornington Peninsula Burma Action Group	Rosemarie Draper	tel: 0410 417 131
Peninsula Refugee & Asylum Seeker Support [PRASS]	Jim Gibson Mount Eliza Inter-Church Council Meeting address on enquiry	tel: 9787 4094 Meetings – intermittent advised by the PRASS email & post out Newsletter or by ringing No cost

Name of Group	Contact	Enquiries
Rice for Cambodia	Shaun or Rebecca McCarthy	tel: 9708 8755 Shaun: 0407 055 348 Rebecca: 0438 055 348 shremacc@bigpond.net.au
Rosebud Multicultural Festival & Cultural Diversity Activities	Rosebud Primary School Corner Jetty & Point Nepean Rds Rosebud 3939	tel: 5986 8274 An annual week of activities, including a Festival
Southern Central Region Migrant Resource Centre Mornington	Mavra Vakalis Volunteer Co-Ordinator Rosamarie Draper Aged Services Development Officer, Mornington Youth & Community Centre 130 Wilson Road Mornington 3931 PO Box 10 Rosebud 3939	tel: 5973 5398 or 0409 421 876 fax: 5973 5402 mavrav@vicnet.net.au rosed@vicnet.au Programs include the: Multicultural Day Care Program Greek Day Care Program English Classes Volunteer program
Southern Women's Action Group [SWAN]	Debbie Roberts P O Box 392 Mt. Martha 3934 Meetings at Mornington Secondary College 1051 Nepean Hwy Mornington 3931	Val: 5974 3461 Maureen: 5974 4096 Bi-Monthly Meetings – Women Only 9.30 am for breakfast 10.00 am for speaker Small cost to cover breakfast & other forum expenses

contact details for some other relevant groups

Name of Group	Contact	Enquiries
<p>The Asylum Seekers Centre</p> <p>A response to the needs of refugees & asylum seekers on bridging visas</p>	<p>David Spitteler Trinity Church House 285 Thomas Street Dandenong 3175</p>	<p>tel: 9802 5268</p> <p>Tuesday & Thursday, 9.00 am to 3.00 pm</p> <p>Distribution of donated items [e.g., fresh food & non-perishable food, household products, personal toiletries, Met travel & phone cards]</p> <p>A speaker is available to speak at community gatherings & events</p>
<p>Asylum Seekers Resource Centre</p> <p>A response for the needs of asylum seekers</p>	<p>Reception 67 Jeffcott Street West Melbourne 3003</p>	<p>tel: 9326 6066 fax: 9326 5199 www.asrc.org.au</p> <p>Essential material aid support</p> <p>Drop in service, distribution of food & toiletries, food bank, casework lawyers & legal outreach service, co-attendance at Court hearings, English tutoring & home tutor, computer classes, Detention Centre Friendship Program, free doctors & health service</p>
<p>Australian Red Cross</p>	<p>Deb Gilbert 23 Villiers Street North Melbourne</p>	<p>tel: 8327 7883</p> <p>Distribution of donated goods [e.g., household furniture & items]</p>
<p>Burma Hope Foundation Inc.</p> <p>Provides material aid & other assistance to Burmese refugees</p>	<p>Erika Stahr 42 Mallawa Street Clayton South 3169</p>	<p>tel: 9543 8352 esta2@student.monash.edu.au</p>
<p>Community Aid Abroad</p>	<p>Jean Thomson</p>	<p>tel: 5974 2809</p> <p>Regular meetings & fundraising</p>
<p>Community Links with Cambodia</p>	<p>Dalene Salisbury</p>	<p>tel: 9772 2269</p> <p>Fundraising for children in the Prey Veng [Meseng District] Province of Rural Cambodia</p>

Name of Group	Contact	Enquiries
Good Shepherd Youth & Family Services Peninsula Staff Social Justice Group	Susan Blackburn - Mitchell	tel: 5979 7600 Staff & wider community social justice activities
Ecumenical Migration Centre		tel: 9416 0044 eme@bsl.org.au www.bsl.org.au
Habitat for Humanity	Mavis Peet PO Box 2257 Rosebud Plaza Rosebud 3939	tel: 5986 4827 Seeks to address housing needs for people on a low income. Prospective house builders & mortgage holders must be actively involved in all aspects of the home build. "Sweat Equity".
Justice for Asylum Seekers Network		tel: 9659 3505 www.rac-vic.org
Pax Christi International Ecumenical Christian Peace Movement	Rita Camilleri PO Box 31 Carlton South 3053	tel: 9379 3889 Intermittent community forums, raising community awareness of personal & global peace Local activity currently on hold
Refugee Action Collective		tel: 9659 3505
Rural Australians for Refugees		Advocacy & Action Group. Seeking to raise community awareness via meetings, video's, circulating literature, letter writing to politicians & those in detention, gatherings between refugees & locals, fundraising & donations to asylum seeker projects [e.g., music & poetry gatherings]
Refugee Council of Australia	36-47 St Johns Road PO Box 946 Glebe NSW 2037	tel: [02] 9660 5300 fax: [02] 9660 5211 info@refugeecouncil.org.au www.refugeecouncil.org.au

Name of Group	Contact	Enquiries
Refugee Immigration Law Centre		tel: 9438 1144 rilc@rilc.org.au www.rilc.org.au
The New Hope Foundation	John Mirabile 1st floor 273 Barkly Street Footscray 3011	tel: 9318 8488 fax: 9318 8499 newhope@vicnet.net.au www.nhf.org.au Provides support, material aid & community education programs to newly arrived migrants assylum seekers & refugees
Union of Australian Women	Mairi Neil Amy Duncan Ross House 2nd Floor 247 Flinders Lane Melbourne 3000	tel: 9587 8758 or 9547 6167 Meetings where issues of concern to women are raised for discussion, information & community action Membership & Newsletter \$30 pa Newsletter Only \$20 pa Unwaged – Both For \$20 pa
Victorian Alliance for Refugees		PO Box 406 Bentleigh 3186
Victorian Survivors for the Survivors of Torture Inc.	Foundation House 6 Gardiner Street Brunswick 3056	tel: 03 9388 0022 International tel: +61 3 9388 0022 fax: 03 9387 0828 International fax: +61 3 9387 0828 info@foundationhouse.org.au www.foundationhouse.org.au
Women & Language Link [WALL]	Collette Aziz Peninsula Women's Information & Support Service 3 Lyons Street Rye 3941	tel: 5985 5955 Providing cultural links for women from non - English speaking backgrounds, to meet & socialize, using English as the linking language
Centre for Multicultural & Youth Services	Level 1 308 Drummond St Carlton 3053	tel: 03 9349 3466 info@cmyi.net.au www.cmyi.net.au Community based organisation advocating for young people from migrant & refugee backgrounds

more information sources

VIDEO'S /DVD'S

- "Australia's Pacific Solution" BBC Correspondent Program

BOOKS

- Asylum: Voices behind the Razor Wire
Heather Tyler. Lothian Books 2003
- Boarderline: Australia's response to refugees and asylum seekers in the wake of Tampa
Peter Mares. UNSW Press 2nd Ed. 2002
- Boy Overboard (for children)
Morris Gleitzman. Penguin 2002
- Dark Victory
David Marr and Marian Wilkinson. Allen and Unwin 2003
- From Nothing to Zero; Letters from Refugees in Australia's Detention Centres with Preface and Chapter introductions by Julian Burnside
Lonely Planet Publications 2003
- Future Seekers; Refugees and the Law in Australia
Mary Crock and Ben Saul. Federation Press 2002
- Girt by Sea; Australia the refugees and the politics of fear
Mungo McCallum. Quarterly Essay 5
- Tales from a Suitcase; the Afghan Experience
Will Davies and Andrea Dal Bosco. Lothian Books 2002

WEB SITES

- Amnesty Fact Sheets www.amnesty.org.au
- Debunking Asylum Seekers myths (Edmund Rice Centre) www.erc.org.au
- Julian Burnside QC www.julianburnside.com
- Refugees Australia National Directory www.refugeesaustralia.org
- Refugee Claimant Support Centre www.refugees.org.au
www.brisbane-stories.webcentral.com.au/scatteredpeople/
- Refugee Council www.refugeecouncil.org.au
- Rural Australians for Refugees (RAR) www.ruralaustraliansforrefugees.org
- United Nations Association of Australia www.unaa.org.au
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees www.unhcr.ch
www.australiaforunhcr.org.au

a just peninsula

working group and interviewers

- Amalia Sintihaki
- Ann Heather White
- Annabel Fegan
- Bonnie Einseidel
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- Gail Price
- Hollie Valentine
- Jim Gibson
- Jodie Kewley
- Margie Urlich
- Rosemarie Draper
- Susan Blackburn-Mitchell

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This booklet is made in appreciation of all the people who are positively involved in social justice issues in their communities: speaking out and taking action, encouraging others to do the same.

good shepherd

mission statement

We are Good Shepherd. Our mission is shaped by our inheritance of the vision, courage and audacity of St. Mary Euphrasia Pelletier and the Good Shepherd tradition she began. Ours is a vision of promoting a world of justice and peaceful co-existence. Ours is the courage to embrace wholeheartedly innovative and creative ways of enabling people of all cultural, religious and social backgrounds to enjoy the fullness of life, which is the right of every human being. Ours is the inheritance to boldly challenge those structures and beliefs that diminish human dignity. We work to ensure the value of every human being, the communities that enable us all to thrive and the integrity of the environment that guarantees both.

mornington peninsula shire

access and equity statement

The Mornington Peninsula Shire is committed to providing good governance to all Mornington Peninsula citizens, irrespective of:

- Social, educational or economic status
- Age
- Ability
- Health status
- Location
- Cultural background
- Household composition
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy, marital, parental or carer status
- Religious or political beliefs and activities



SHIRE SUSTAINABILITY GRAPHIC

The Mornington Peninsula Shire supports human rights and is dedicated to facilitating the necessary conditions and opportunities to enable all people to be free from discrimination and to be treated fairly. This includes having access to healthy places and spaces, healthy lifestyle choices, quality life opportunities, participation in active local communities and a sense of hope and belonging now and in the future.

The full Policy can be found on the Shire's Website www.mornpen.vic.gov.au under Community and Health.

mornington peninsula shire

principles of access and equity

The Mornington Peninsula Shire is committed to the provision of accessible community infrastructure and services that are equitably available and delivered, being inclusive of the range of social and cultural needs and aspirations within the Mornington Peninsula community, free from any form of discrimination.

These principles are defined as:

1. ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability to the community, that includes a Shire role in facilitating safe environments that are conducive to sustaining and building constructive relationships amongst disparate community interests.

2. MEANINGFUL CONSULTATION

Meaningful and inclusive consultation in the development of policy, planning and implementation of council programs, projects and services.

3. COMPREHENSIVE INFORMATION

Provision of comprehensive information delivered in appropriate forms and ways, so that citizens can make informed decisions and choices about services, facilities, places or activities most relevant to them.

4. PROVIDING PROACTIVE LEADERSHIP

Responsibility to promote citizenship and to advocate for and with the community and others to advance access and equity principles.

5. ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATION

Provision of an environment that enables genuine opportunities for all citizens to participate fully in a safe community life.

6. CONSTRUCTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Support for processes that achieve equal partnership and ownership of issues and outcomes in the community to achieve common goals based on access and equity principles.

7. SOCIAL JUSTICE

A fair and just distribution of community infrastructure, services and social resources essential to achieving a healthy lifestyle for all.

8. SUSTAINABILITY

Commitment to planning and service delivery which is environmentally, socially and economically sustainable, and which improves the present and future quality of life on the Mornington Peninsula, maintaining the ecological processes on which life depends.

9. FOSTERING WELL BEING

Commitment to improve the quality of life and health of the community, free from discrimination and recognising the impact of social, cultural, environmental (natural and built) and economic factors within policy, planning and development.